

14,000 LIGHTHOUSES:  
RENEWING THE "C" IN THE YMCA

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To my wife, Ashli, with love... forever.

Written to the future leaders of the YMCA: June 1894

Our fellow workers of the ages to come, whom, though yet unborn, we greet today, may have yet to record yet nobler achievements, **if only they never forget that the one secret of success is the life of the Spirit of God in the heart, and that love of souls which makes every Christian a missionary.** Without any outward aids our forefathers succeeded, because they had in their hearts this fire of first love; and without this, no commodious buildings, no wise organizations, no staff of able secretaries can keep our Association from going to decay. Nothing can take the place of spiritual life, and spiritual life is one long victory. **Courage then, brothers of today and tomorrow! On our knees at the foot of the Cross, where we swear allegiance to our Divine Master, let us ask without ceasing for a renewal of that baptism of life out of which has arisen, among countless other blessed institutions, our Young Men's Christian Association.**

-President, G. Tophel,  
General Secretary, CH. Fermaud  
*Fifty Years' Work Amongst Young  
Men In All Lands; A Review of the  
Work of the Young Men's Christian  
Associations* (Emphasis Mine)

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It is a joy to acknowledge some special people that have joined me on this journey. There are thousands and thousands of YMCA employees that desire, above all else, to uplift Christ through their work at the YMCA. They work long hours, get paid very little and sacrifice greatly for the beautiful mission to which they have pledged their lives. Thanks for coaching kids, teaching lessons, opening gyms, counseling at camps, mentoring the next generation and displaying Christ through real life. I can't wait to hear the stories of your faithfulness celebrated in Heaven. May these words help to fuel the passionate pursuit of your life!

I am also thankful that God is raising up a number of revolutionary, mission-minded church planters that view the YMCA as the greatest platform in the world to plant a church. I can't wait until the day where there will be 14,000 of us!

I would like to thank Dr. Tim Beougher, my DMIN mentor and friend who guided this project, Dr. Robert Coleman, Dr. David Currie and my buddy in this journey, Kennon Vaughn. I also am grateful for those who have ministered to me for a lifetime: my parents, my in-laws, and my three "glorious brothers."

Finally, I am blessed to not only have an amazing wife, but four passionate sons who sword fight with sticks, sling mud at each other and play football with me in the back yard. Oh how I love each of them!

## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines whether or not the YMCA has drifted from its original mission. It begins by tracing the foundation of its mission throughout its historical roots and demonstrates the profound effects that the YMCA has been able to accomplish when it has operated according to its mission of putting Christian principles into practice. It measures the mission knowledge and application within the specific context of Countryside YMCA in Lebanon, Ohio and also examines other research to assess if the results are reflective of the movement as a whole. The conclusion reveals that Countryside YMCA has drifted from its mission. The author introduces a three part, reproducible strategy to renew the "C" in a local YMCA through two training seminars, a chaplaincy program and the planting of a missional church that is strategically partnered with a local YMCA.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

#### Introduction

There is a scene in *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*, when Gandalf the Wizard asks Pippin the Hobbit to accomplish a critical task. He is asked to light the beacon.<sup>1</sup> The beacon is merely a tower that is filled with dead wood. In essence, it is a massive torch that carries a mighty purpose. When the dead wood catches fire, other watching men will see its light and they, in turn, will light their beacons. Lights will flicker for miles upon miles across the horizon, illuminating the darkness and calling all the men of middle earth to battle. Today, there are 14,000 towers of light that spread across this world. These lighthouses are known as The Young Men's Christian Associations. Like massive torches of dead wood they bear the potential to give the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations. They have been built for this purpose. Their foundation, heritage and stated mission all lead towards this goal. However, this author's assumption is that this bright light has dimmed and is in desperate need of being lit again.

This thesis project will examine the global movement of the YMCA with a focused emphasis on Countryside YMCA, the largest, independent YMCA in the world. It will assess whether or not Countryside has drifted from the true mission of the YMCA. The author will then propose a reproducible strategy to re-light the lighthouse at Countryside, with the ultimate aim of creating a catalytic movement of light that shines to the ends of the earth. The author believes that there will be a day when the atrophied mission of the YMCA will be restored. The dimming light of 14,000 lighthouses will, once again, flare with brightness and shine with strength. People from every tribe, language, nation and

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Jackson, dir., *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (Los Angeles: New Line Cinema, 2003).



tongue will encounter Christ through the Young Men's Christian Association for these mighty beacons will, once again, shine forth with the Light that is Life.

This chapter will begin by revealing the true mission of the YMCA as a global movement with the purpose to fulfill the Great Commission. It will trace the development of this mission throughout history as the voices of many YMCA leaders will consistently proclaim a unified purpose. After establishing its true mission, the staggering potential of the YMCA for global, kingdom impact will be explored. The author will then introduce the specific setting of Countryside YMCA. Assumptions about its specific mission drift will be proposed and the tool that will assess these assumptions will be introduced. Finally, the author will introduce a reproducible strategy to re-light the lighthouse at Countryside YMCA with the ultimate goal of re-lighting the 14,000 lighthouses around the world.

### **The Purpose of 14,000 Lighthouses**

In order to understand if the YMCA has truly drifted from its mission, one must first have a comprehensive understanding of the true mission of the YMCA. Thankfully, there is no need to speculate the purpose of this organization as it has been clearly communicated and affirmed throughout history. From its founder, to its leaders, to its constitutional statements, the heartbeat of this movement has remained remarkably consistent from its early beginnings to the modern era.

As this thesis will explore in the next chapter, the YMCA was birthed out of a dorm-room, prayer meeting by George Williams and eleven of his co-workers in 1844. They called themselves the "Young Men's Christian Association" and stated their purpose as "the improvement of the spiritual condition of young men engaged in the drapery and other trades, by the introduction of religious services among them."<sup>2</sup> It is

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<sup>2</sup> Emmett Dedmon, *Great Enterprises: 100 years of the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1957), 19.

incredibly significant that the original purpose was radically focused upon "spiritual conditions." God seemed to truly bless this mission focus and within a year, a movement was beginning as 18 other groups were organized within the city of London. The leaders saw the need to broaden their purpose beyond the realms of drapes and trades as they adjusted their mission to be, "improving the spiritual and mental condition of young men in houses of business."<sup>3</sup> By 1846, they finally concluded that their purpose needed to be, "the spiritual and mental improvement of young men by any means in accordance with the Scriptures."<sup>4</sup> The YMCA began as no less than a biblically grounded ministry movement! Many years later, John R. Mott was interviewing Williams about the true purpose of the YMCA. Mott asked the question, "What was in your mind and in the minds of your colleagues which led you to form the first Young Men's Christian Association?" Williams quickly replied, "We had only one thing in mind and that was to bind our little company together in order that we might the better lead our comrades to Christ, and in order that we might share with one another our personal experience of Christ."<sup>5</sup> The foundation, motivation and guiding purpose of the YMCA movement was Jesus Christ.

Rapidly, this movement began to spread from London to other parts of Europe and beyond. Thomas Sullivan was the man who heard the description of what God was doing through the YMCA in London and decided that it needed to be present in America.<sup>6</sup> Sullivan had a passion for evangelism as he devoted much of his time to handing out evangelistic tracts to seamen who were away from home. After hearing of the YMCA, he decided that his home city of Boston was a perfect city to join this movement. He addressed the public with a statement of purpose as he proclaimed that

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<sup>3</sup> Dedmon, *Great Enterprises*, 19.

<sup>4</sup> Dedmon, *Great Enterprises*, 19.

<sup>5</sup> John R. Mott, *Confronting Young Men with the Living Christ* (New York: Association Press, 1923), 14.

<sup>6</sup> C. Howard Hopkins, *History of the YMCA in North America* (New York: Association Press, 1951), 17.

the association would become,

...a social organization of those in whom the love of Christ has produced love to men; who shall meet the young stranger as he enters our city, take him by the hand, direct him to a boarding house where he may find a quiet home pervaded with Christian influences . . . and in every way throw around him good influences, so that he may feel that he is not a stranger, but that noble and Christian spirits care for his soul . . .<sup>7</sup>

It is essential to note that the original YMCA in America had nothing to do with a workout facility, karate classes, or hand motions to a song by the "Village People." The YMCA was focused on loving Christ and loving people. It was driven by a mission to fulfill the Great Commission by extending the love of Christ to those in need.

Over the course of the next eleven years, this movement spread globally in remarkable ways. In 1855, delegates traveled from all over the world to attend the first world conference of the Young Men's Christian Association in Paris, France. It was here that the original, global purpose statement of the YMCA was agreed upon and adopted.<sup>8</sup> It boldly states, "The Young Men's Christian Associations seek to unite those young men who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Savior, according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to be his disciples in their faith and in their life, and to associate their efforts for the extension of his Kingdom amongst young men."<sup>9</sup>

This statement has incredible significance as it establishes the foundation of the YMCA to be a Christ-centered, Biblically grounded, disciple making, mission organization. This statement was then reaffirmed as the global mission statement at the 6<sup>th</sup> world council in 1973 and at the 14<sup>th</sup> world council in 1998.<sup>10</sup> Today, this is the uncontested, current mission of the Young Men's Christian Association. Incredibly, there are currently more than 14,000 global locations that, theoretically, align themselves with this great purpose.

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<sup>7</sup> Hopkins, *History of the YMCA*, 18.

<sup>8</sup> *Constitution and Bylaws of the National Council of Young Men's Christian Associations of the United States of America* (Chicago: YMCA of the USA, 2007), 37.

<sup>9</sup> *Constitution and Bylaws*, 37.

<sup>10</sup> [www.ymca.int/who-we-are/mission/challenge-21-1998](http://www.ymca.int/who-we-are/mission/challenge-21-1998) (accessed January 10th, 2011).

In 1891, a handbook was created to train all YMCA workers on the purpose, history, and organization of the YMCA. The very first sentence in this book falls under the subtitle, "why this work is needed." It states, "By the command 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.'"<sup>11</sup> The handbook goes on to reveal the statistic that though there were over thirteen million men in the United States and Canada, their tragic estimate was that only one million men were members of local evangelical churches. They agonized over this statistic and then proclaimed, "The object of the Young Men's Christian Association is to save and develop young men."<sup>12</sup> This was truly a movement centered upon the purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission. This training handbook affirms the sentiment of Rev. Henry Potter as years earlier, he gave a passionate address, stating,

There are countless undertakings in which we may, if we choose, employ ourselves; all of them, doubtless, having some good and desirable end in view; but the question for Young Men's Christian Associations ought surely to be this; 'How can most be done for young men?' Happy shall we be, if by God's blessing upon our poor endeavors, we can help save our youth, and in these anxious and eventful hours, raise up for the defense of truth and freedom and the cause of Christ, a mighty and resistless host of regenerate and Christian young men.<sup>13</sup>

A final important aspect of this early handbook focuses upon the three primary areas of emphasis that all YMCAs should strive to accomplish. The first area is "Prevention" with the description, "To guard young men morally by keeping them away from places of evil resort through counter attractions; surrounding them with wholesome associations; and bringing them under the power of the gospel." The second aspect is "Rescue," accompanied with the definition, "To extend a helping hand to the fallen, and to lead them to Christ." The third and final aspect is "Education," with the description, "To

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<sup>11</sup> H. S. Ninde, J. T. Bowne, and Erskine Uhl. eds., *A Handbook of the History, Organization, and Methods of Work of Young Men's Christian Associations* (New York: The International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations, 1891), 13.

<sup>12</sup> Ninde, Bowne, and Uhl. eds., *A Handbook*, 16.

<sup>13</sup> Ninde, Bowne, and Uhl. eds., *A Handbook*, 43.

build up young men, spiritually, intellectually, and physically.”<sup>14</sup> These goals would seem to say that the ultimate purpose of the YMCA is to be a lighthouse amidst the storms of this world. The light of the gospel should shine so brightly that sailors should be protected from moral shipwreck and rescued to salvation. Once rescued, young men are to be disciplined to spiritual, intellectual and physical maturity. However, if this author's assumption is correct, then the YMCA is currently succeeding in the realms of physical development but has drifted significantly from its other purposes.

As the years progressed, the YMCA's statements of purpose did not wane in passion or boldness. The leaders of this movement continued to fervently proclaim their mission. In the early 1900s more handbooks were created to train workers. In 1903, the first paragraph of the training handbook states,

The Young Men's Christian Association differs from merely recreative, educational, and ethical movements by its pervading spiritual intent and its aggressive religious activity. The making of Christian men through faith in and complete self-surrender to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord is its controlling purpose.<sup>15</sup>

Another training handbook was produced in 1912 to train workers to fulfill the purpose of the YMCA. The international committee desired to describe the most important attributes of their workers. Therefore, they clearly depicted their ultimate desire, stating, “Above all, we need men of deep religious faith, filled with the conviction that Jesus Christ is the answer to the deepest needs alike of the individual and of society, men whose meat and drink it will be to do their Lord's work of awakening other men to the Divine call of sonship and service.”<sup>16</sup> These YMCA leaders felt like the defining essence of a YMCA employee was no less than the high calling of ministry. They were meant to be a part of a work that transforms lives for Jesus Christ. Again, it is

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<sup>14</sup> Ninde, Bowne, and Uhl. eds., *A Handbook*, 22.

<sup>15</sup> E. F. See., *Religious Work for Men; Principles and Methods* (New York: The International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations, 1903), 7.

<sup>16</sup> The International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations, *Principles & Methods of Religious Work For Men and Boys* (New York: Association Press, 1912), 11.

the assumption of this author that the current leadership of the YMCA would not say that their ultimate desire for their workers would be men and women that are radically focused on “awakening other men to the Divine call of sonship and service.”

Beyond the workers, original members of the YMCA didn’t see themselves as merely joining a social club or a workout facility. They felt like they were joining a mission to win others for Christ. For example, in 1860, a member of the Chicago association stated, “Most of the those who joined, it should be remembered, were more than names on a roll. They were active workers, pledged to win others to a Christian way of life.”<sup>17</sup> Perhaps, Dwight L. Moody said it best when he stated, “Even if our gymnasium is crowded, and our musical and literary entertainments are intensely interesting, unless souls are converted we fail in the great aim of our Association.”<sup>18</sup> Both the members and workers of the YMCA were truly driven by a vision of fulfilling the Great Commission.

Another indication of their driving purpose can be merely seen by the titles of the books that were used in the movement. Books that were published by the International Committee for the YMCA had titles like, *Taking Men Alive: Studies in the Principles and Practice of Individual Soul-Winning* by Charles Trumbull. He started this book with the premise that every human being on earth will be taken alive in a spiritual sense. The rest of the book focuses on principles in which to take men alive for the Kingdom of God. This was once used as one of the core handbooks of the YMCA!<sup>19</sup> John R. Mott, who led the American Associations, wrote books such as, *Confronting Young Men with the Living Christ*. In this book, he explains that the spiritual vitality and fruitfulness of the YMCA is dependant upon their ability to reach people for Jesus.<sup>20</sup> An amazing focus upon the

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<sup>17</sup> Emmett Dedmon, *Great Enterprises: 100 years of the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1957), 36.

<sup>18</sup> Dedmon, *Great Enterprises*, 79.

<sup>19</sup> Charles Trumbull, *Taking Men Alive: Studies in the Principles and Practices of Soul-Winning* (New York: Revell, 1938), 29-32.

<sup>20</sup> John R. Mott, *Confronting Young Men with the Living Christ* (New York: Association Press, 1923), 13.

Great Commission once existed in this organization and was evident throughout all of its literature!

### **The YMCA and the Church**

In addition to these statements of purpose, it is also helpful to understand that the YMCA has always seen itself as being intentionally connected to the local Church. The National Constitutional Convention of America desired to make this clear as they gathered in 1923 to state their purpose. Therefore, in the preamble to the Constitution of the YMCA, they added,

We, the Young Men's Christian Associations of the United States and Canada, through our representatives in Constitutional Convention assembled, reverently and joyfully confessing our faith in Jesus Christ our Lord and only Savior and our unswerving allegiance to His Church, recognizing humbly the creative hand of God along the pathway of nearly a century of corporate experience, and dedicating ourselves afresh to our great mission of bringing under the sway of his Kingdom the young manhood and boyhood of North America and of the other lands served by our Associations . . .<sup>21</sup>

Not only did these men and women proclaim their exclusive devotion to Jesus Christ, but they also added that the YMCA has an “unswerving” allegiance with the local church. Nearly eighty years ago, these passionate men gathered together and pledged that the organization that God had called them to lead would be totally committed to lock arms with local churches as they attempt to establish God’s Kingdom on this earth. The General Secretary of the National Council of YMCAs once stated, “The YMCA was born in the Church and still derives its spiritual and most of its material sustenance from church people... While autonomous, the YMCA is utterly dependent upon the Church.

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<sup>21</sup> *Constitution and Bylaws of the National Council of Young Men’s Christian Associations of the United States of America* (Chicago: YMCA of the USA), 37.

Cut off from its sustaining life and resources, the YMCA in its essential character could not survive.”<sup>22</sup> In the 1912 handbook, associations are instructed that,

The association is an agency of the Church, at work among men and boys. Its objective is the objective of the Church; its spirit is the spirit of the Church; its work is a part of the activities of the Church. Its ultimate objective, in common with other Christian agencies, is no less comprehensive than the winning of every man and boy, in this and other lands, for Christ and for membership and active service in His Church.<sup>23</sup>

Some may validly question whether these are simply old and lifeless statements that are collecting dust on the shelves of antiquated archives. However, theoretically, each association still commits to these statements as the defining charter that guides each organization. Each year, every CEO of every association in America signs a statement entitled “the annual pledge.” If any leader refuses to sign this pledge statement, their association ceases to be a YMCA. This pledge is meant to be a binding commitment that establishes their main focus. The first point on the annual pledge states,

That our association accepts and supports the statement of purpose of the Young Men’s Christian Associations of the United States of America, which is: The YMCA in its essential genius, is a worldwide fellowship, united in a common loyalty to Jesus Christ for the purpose of building a Christian personality and a more Christian society.<sup>24</sup>

Again, the centrality of Jesus Christ and the spreading of His truth constitute the defining essence of what it means to be a YMCA.

In addition to each of these statements of purpose, there is a final declaration that is critical to the current operations of the YMCA in the United States. The following statement has become the current mission statement of the YMCA of the USA. These words are hung upon walls, painted across murals and printed upon t-shirts. The mission of the YMCA of the USA is, “To put Christian principles into practice through programs

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<sup>22</sup> Paul Limbert, *Christian Emphasis in YMCA Program* (New York: Association Press, 1944), 95.

<sup>23</sup> The International Committee of Young Men’s Christian Associations, *Principles & Methods of Religious Work For Men and Boys* (New York: Association Press, 1912), 11-12.

<sup>24</sup> *Pledge Statement, Certification and Membership Standards* (Chicago: YMCA of the USA, 2007).



that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all."<sup>25</sup> Nearly every American association verbally complies with this statement and commits to following it. Very simply, this means that the YMCA is meant to be the organization that seeks to apply the principles of Jesus Christ to a life setting of holistic growth.

From its founder, to its leaders, to its handbooks to its constitution, there is a consistent purpose of the YMCA that is communicated, agreed upon and pledged to. From old books upon shelves, to current statements upon walls, to phrases printed on tie-died, camp t-shirts, a common mission is revealed. The YMCA exists to shine the light of Jesus Christ to this World!

### **The Potential of 14,000 Lighthouses**

When one considers the sheer amount of YMCAs around the world, combined with its scope and influence, mind staggering results for God's Kingdom could be accomplished if their purpose was a reflection of reality. For example, there are 14,000 YMCAs located in nearly every major urban gathering point of the world. If they were to truly operate according to their mission, we would witness an awesome network of missional outposts dedicated to redeeming cities for Christ. Outside of the local church, this would be the largest missions organization in the world!

In addition to the normal functions of most local associations, the YMCA is also the largest provider of childcare in the world. For example, in the United States alone, there are nearly 10,000 childcare sites that provide care for over 500,000 children.<sup>26</sup> More than 10% of all children in school-age childcare are in a YMCA childcare program.<sup>27</sup> It is staggering to think that one in every 10 children that are in school age

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<sup>25</sup> *Constitution and Bylaws of the National Council of Young Men's Christian Associations of the United States of America* (Chicago: YMCA of the USA, 2007).

<sup>26</sup> [www.ymca.net/about\\_the\\_ymca/](http://www.ymca.net/about_the_ymca/) (accessed May 10, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> [www.ymca.net/resources\\_for\\_families](http://www.ymca.net/resources_for_families) (accessed May 10, 2008).

childcare, attend a program whose primary purpose, theoretically, is to teach these kids the truth of Jesus Christ. If the YMCA were to operate according to its mission, then it would be the largest provider of Christian education in the world! Not only is the sheer size of this program incredible, but 50% of these children come from homes where the median income is less than 25,000 dollars a year and 40% of these children come from single-parent homes.<sup>28</sup> The YMCA could be the organization that teaches the truth of Jesus Christ to the poorest kids in this country.

The YMCA's influence amongst children doesn't end with childcare. The YMCA also has the largest association of camps in the world. Simply stated, when parents send their kids off to summer camps, a high percentage of these children go to camps where the primary mission is centered upon encountering Jesus Christ. The ultimate purpose of these camps is that they would merely be platforms to shine forth the light of Jesus Christ. If these camps would truly operate according to the true mission of the YMCA, then the influence upon these kids in their formative years would be profound and far reaching. Campfire talks would be means of communicating the Gospel, counselors would be trained to disciple kids and educational experiences would be designed to build the faith of the next generation.

Beyond childcare and camps, the YMCA is also the largest provider of sports programming in the world. From T-ball, to soccer, to basketball, to swim lessons, many kids first experience the realm of sports through the YMCA. In the years before Athletes in Action, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and Upwards sports programs were formed, it was the YMCA who used the platform of athletics to teach Christian character and to teach the next generation the hope of Christ. This author believes that we are in a character crisis within modern athletics. The era where sports heroes were looked to as

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<sup>28</sup> [www.ymca.net/resources\\_for\\_families](http://www.ymca.net/resources_for_families) (accessed May 10, 2008).

the role models of character and citizenship has quickly dissipated and a new era of steroids, arrogance and incessant materialism defines much of modern athletics. If the YMCA were to truly function according to its true mission, then this writer believes it would have a profound impact upon the next generation of athletes. Coaches would be trained to display Christ and to teach character to kids through the platforms of sports. Ironically, the YMCA sports programs would not be embarking upon a new philosophy, but simply fulfilling their stated purposes.

In addition to all of these areas, the YMCA is also the largest organization of non-profit associations in the world, the largest network of wellness facilities in the world<sup>29</sup> and along with the Red Cross and the Salvation Army, one of the largest social service organizations in the world.<sup>30</sup> From exercise facilities to orphanages to homeless shelters, the YMCA's influence is broad and far reaching. Perhaps one of the more stunning statistics is that, at the time of this writing, the YMCA is the second most recognized global brand in the world next to Coca-Cola.<sup>31</sup> With all of these things considered, the influence that could be had for the Gospel, through the organization of the YMCA, is almost immeasurable.

### **Assumption of this Thesis-Project**

After examining the true mission of the YMCA and its sheer potential, one must ask the critical question, "Is the YMCA functioning according to its true mission?" John R. Mott, the great Christian leader, recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize and President of the YMCA of the USA warned of the danger of moving from a religious to a human institution in this penetrating quote:

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<sup>29</sup> [www.ymca.net](http://www.ymca.net) (accessed May 10, 2008).

<sup>30</sup> [www.ymca.net/international/](http://www.ymca.net/international/) (accessed May 10, 2008).

<sup>31</sup> This statistic comes from a conversation with Kim Phillips from the Y of the USA. The YMCA brand fluctuates in the top 3 most recognized logos in the world and at the time of this interview, September, 2008, it was considered number 2.

If the Young Men's Christian Association is to increase its spiritual vitality and fruitfulness, it must maintain at all costs its distinctively Christian, pronouncedly evangelistic, and aggressively missionary character. This is tantamount to saying that it must preserve its clear Christian aim, its unshakable Christian foundation, and its genuinely Christian control; that it must hold in proper prominence its Christian program and be animated by a genuinely Christian spirit. The Association must steadfastly resist the danger of becoming a mere human institution – in a general sense religious but not emphatically, pervasively, and contagiously Christian. This essential must never be compromised, obscured, or abandoned for the sake of any plausible outward success or worldly advantage, for such a course would mark the beginning of the end. Wherever an Association lacks world-conquering power, it is because it has to some extent been conquered by the world.<sup>32</sup>

A quote of this power and depth demands us to ask the critical question, "Has the YMCA been conquered by the world?" Has it become as Mott warned, "a mere human institution – in a general sense religious but not emphatically, pervasively, and contagiously Christian?" Is the YMCA truly a movement of 14,000 lighthouses shining the light of Christ brightly within the darkness, or has this light dimmed throughout the world? Has the YMCA drifted from its true mission? Has it preserved, as Mott pleaded, "its clear Christian aim, its unshakable Christian foundation, and its genuinely Christian control"?

It is this author's assumption the bright light of the YMCA has indeed experienced a global dimming. This writer's expectation is that there has been a great drifting of mission that has occurred within this movement. I assume that the employees of the YMCA, hired to be in full-time ministry, have very little idea as to the true mission of their job. I expect that their knowledge of their true mission, core values and historical foundation is dismal. I also assume that this lack of mission knowledge would be present throughout the entire organization, from the national leaders, to the executive staff, to the common lifeguards. I also assume that if they have very little knowledge of their

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<sup>32</sup>John R. Mott, *Confronting Young Men With the Living Christ* (New York: Association Press, 1923), 69.

mission that there is even less application of their mission within the programs that they lead. If I am correct, then the largest provider of childcare in the world is not ultimately using this platform to teach the next generation the hope of Christ. My expectation is that the largest provider of sports programming in the world is not using soccer, flag football, t-ball and swim lessons as an avenue to fulfill the ultimate goal of reaching kids for Jesus Christ. But instead, my intuition is that the operational success of each program has become the mission itself. My great assumption is that the light of 14,000 lighthouses has dimmed and is in desperate need of being lit again!

### **The World's Largest Lighthouse**

Though it is this author's intent to call the entire YMCA movement to its true mission, this project will focus upon the specific setting of one lighthouse. Through the lens of this specific lighthouse, it is my hope to assess the mission drift of this particular setting, to evaluate whether the results are indicative of the broad movement as a whole and to create a reproducible strategy to re-light this lighthouse.

Countryside YMCA in Lebanon, Ohio is the largest local branch of the YMCA in the world. Its members and program members consist of nearly 35,000 people. The facility is over 260,000 square feet on 170 acres. Though there are associations of YMCAs in other cities that have a larger joint membership and greater leadership throughout the movement as a whole, Countryside is unique in its size and influence. As previously mentioned, if this YMCA would truly live its mission, a ripple effect would be created as many YMCAs throughout the nation and world would, naturally, follow Countryside.

## Assessing the Brightness

By God's grace, this author has a special relationship with Countryside. I am the pastor of Antioch, the church of the Y. This is a church that not only meets in the YMCA for our worship services, but it also seeks to integrate into the overall life and programs of the YMCA. Our church sees the YMCA as a strategic missional platform. As this thesis-project will later explore, when a church sees a secular gathering point as a strategic location to engage in ministry, a powerful, missional dynamic can happen. Not only do I pastor this church, but I also serve on the board of directors at the Countryside YMCA and on the executive council, the key leadership board that has authority over the direction of this YMCA. As part of my overall desire for Countryside to live according to its mission, I have designed a tool to assess how far this specific YMCA has drifted from its foundations.

The Lord has opened up an amazingly strategic opportunity for me to train all of the members of the Countryside staff in their mission, core values and vision for their job itself. By God's grace, every employee is required to come under my teaching for two large training sessions. I basically have the opportunity to coach them through the purpose of their job. The Countryside staff has between 500 and 600 employees.

Along with an amazing opportunity to share the Gospel with each employee, this opportunity has offered a platform to assess their current understanding of the mission. I teach groups of about 100 employees at a time. I have created a survey with four important questions that assess their level of mission understanding during their first training session. These questions are asked to every employee and therefore the crowd contains the whole spectrum of YMCA leadership. From executive directors over major areas to the janitor that cleans the bathrooms to the high-school lifeguard that watches over the water slide, every single employee must answer these four questions.

I attempted to form the survey in a way that would be as fun as possible and, therefore, I entitled it, "Are you smarter than a YMCA 5<sup>th</sup> grader?" As I give this survey, the game show music plays in the background and they are each given a blank piece of paper and asked to respond to the following questions by giving themselves a score of 1 to 10. A score of 1 would indicate, "I have absolutely no idea." A score of 10 means, "I am very confident of the answer." The following questions formed the basis of my survey:

1. Could you write out the mission of the YMCA?
2. Could you name the 5 core values that guide your job here at the YMCA?
3. Could you name the 11 Christian principles?
4. Could you give a brief history of how the YMCA began and how it has grown in its worldwide influence?

As this author examines the results of these surveys and how the current mission knowledge would impact the employees' leadership over the 400 existing programs at Countryside YMCA, it should be one of the key indicators as to whether or not Countryside has drifted from its true purpose.

In addition to the survey of the Countryside YMCA, two other national surveys will be examined to compare and contrast the results of a local lighthouse, to the results of the national movement of lighthouses. The first survey was conducted by Triangle 2 partners, a consultant to YMCAs. This study was entitled, "Spirituality and the YMCA"<sup>33</sup> and it consisted of 300 phone interviews focused on the category of members and non-members of the YMCA. In addition to the benefit of sampling many YMCAs, the results of this research are a helpful addition because the survey that I am utilizing focuses

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<sup>33</sup>This survey was conducted by Triangle 2 Partners and Perdue research group in June, 2004. It is referred to in Eric Ellsworth's work, "The YMCA's challenge of Being a Christian Organization in a Multicultural Society" (Masters Thesis, Springfield College, 2005).

upon the employees of the YMCA while this survey focused both upon members of the YMCA and members of the community at large.

After focusing upon the employees of Countryside YMCA and members and non-members of the YMCA community, this author will also examine the mission drift of the highest leaders of the YMCA movement. In 2005, there was a very insightful survey conducted that measured the views of key leaders from the National board of the YMCA and the CEOs and COOs of the largest YMCAs in the United States. Eric Ellsworth, the CEO of the Indianapolis association, conducted this research.<sup>34</sup> Sixty-five CEOs and COOs of the largest and most influential YMCAs responded to the survey. Their answers are revealing as they are the primary leaders that many YMCAs around the world seek to follow.

### The Strategy to Re-light the Lighthouse

In light of the results that will be attained, this author will then introduce a three-part strategy that will be implemented at Countryside YMCA. The goal will be no less than to bring Countryside back to its original mission and to re-light the lighthouse for Jesus Christ in this community.

The first initiative will be the development of two training seminars. The first is a mission seminar and the second is a core values training module. Each of these 2-hour training sessions will share the Gospel with every employee of Countryside YMCA, train them in the history of their organization, coach them towards the true essence of their job and establish expectations for their future job success.

The second initiative is the development of a chaplaincy program. This program is within the great flow of the history of the YMCA movement as many of the greatest

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<sup>34</sup> Eric Ellsworth, "The YMCA's challenge of Being a Christian Organization in a Multicultural Society" (Masters Thesis, Springfield College, 2005).



Christian leaders of all time have been YMCA chaplains. The chaplains will be intentional vessels of evangelism and discipleship within Countryside YMCA and they will teach classes, encourage members, disciple staff, and become a ministry presence through each of the major sections of the YMCA. I will personally select and oversee the first group of chaplains. There will be no more than seven initial chaplains and we will engage in monthly training sessions that will focus on building a strong foundation of evangelism and discipleship. I will then raise up leaders to oversee both the administrative responsibilities of the chaplaincy program and also the spiritual mentorship of the chaplaincy program.

The third initiative is the establishment of a true missional church that is focused on being the light within the community of the YMCA and helping the organization live out its true mission. Steps will be explored as to the most effective way to plant a church within a YMCA. The goal will be to missionally integrate into the very life of the YMCA. Church members will coach kids' sports teams, teach classes, attend programs and be present "on purpose" throughout the areas of the YMCA community. When these three steps are brought to fruition, this author believes that the dimming light of the Countryside YMCA will begin to shine brightly once again!

In the summer of 2009, a group of church planters stepped into a YMCA in a small town in Indiana. They had sought this author's counsel on how to plant a missional church in this strategic location. Their hopes began high but their excitement slightly waned as they saw that the building was old and falling apart. Few people were walking the halls and a strange "deadness" seemed to fill the air. However, as I advised, they approached the front desk and one person politely asked the lady working there, "Excuse me, but I was just wondering what you, specifically, do here to put Christian principles into practice?" She looked somewhat confused and responded, "What do you mean?" So he clarified, "I mean how do you, intentionally, put Christian principles into

practice around here?" Obviously clueless to what he was talking about, she replied, "I'm not sure I understand." He then asked her to turn her chair around as he pointed to the mission statement on the wall behind her and said, "You know... your mission here? How do you live out your mission here?" She slowly read the words upon the wall, turned back to them and said, "I guess we don't really do that here." As they were leaving the building, they looked back at the four bronze letters that hung upon the outside wall. In an eerie and ironic way, the "C" was so rusted that it had turned upside down and was ready to fall to the ground. In many ways, this story is symbolic of what this author believes has happened to the broad movement of the YMCA. The "C" was once brightly shining and at the center of the organization. Though the foundation of Jesus Christ is still printed in constitutions and fastened to walls, there is a lack of knowledge and application that pervades this movement. The "C" is still present, but somewhat rusted and turned upside down. The next chapter will offer a historical and Biblical perspective of how the "C" once shined brightly and the process of its rusting and turning upside down. But by God's grace and for His glory, the world will soon experience the cleaning of the rust, the shining of metal, and the re-fastening of the central letter in the YMCA.

## CHAPTER 2

### A THEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK: THE LIGHTING AND DIMMING OF THE LIGHTHOUSES

The strength of any lighthouse is found not merely in the brightness of its light, but in the fact that it is built upon a foundation of rock. This solid foundation causes it to remain strong and unwavering amidst the crashing waves of the sea. If it is removed from its firm foundation, a lighthouse becomes a mere houseboat, tossed to and fro by the ever-changing tides of the shifting sea. This chapter will seek to establish the Biblical and historical foundation of the movement of the YMCA. It will begin by providing a Biblical definition of revival, evangelism, and discipleship. The author will show how these three aspects of ministry work together to shine the light of Jesus Christ to communities. Biblical models of these three functions will be explored through the examples of the church of Antioch and Paul and Barnabas's ministry to the Thessalonians.

Secondly, the author will provide a historical sketch of how these three Biblical principles have worked together, throughout the movement of the YMCA, to shine the light of Jesus Christ to communities all over the world. Inspiring stories of people such as George Williams, John R. Mott, D. L. Moody, Oswald Chambers, and also many of the great associations that have impacted lives for Christ by engaging in evangelism, discipleship and revival will be recounted.

Finally, it will be necessary to examine how the great YMCA lighthouses of the world have dimmed. This author will examine the three major periods of the movement of the YMCA and how subtle shifts in theology and emphases have led to its decline. This author will then offer observations towards the general pattern of decline than can be applied to any ministry. It has often been said that those who do not know their

history are bound to repeat it. When it comes to the Young Men's Christian Association, this writer would contend that the movement must relearn its history so that it may, indeed, repeat it!

### **The Biblical Foundation of Revival, Evangelism, and Discipleship**

This writer believes that if the YMCA is to be used again by God as a movement of mighty lighthouses across this world, that they must be built upon a Biblical foundation. The Bible is constantly pointing to three aspects of ministry that operate together to build God's kingdom on earth. These aspects of ministry are the Biblical concepts of revival, discipleship and evangelism. One must gain a Biblical understanding of these areas of ministry to understand how the YMCA can be used of God again.

This writer would define "revival" as a season when God awakens a group of His people to their true nature and purpose and allows His ministry to surge forward with extraordinary power.<sup>1</sup> It is essential to note that revival comes from God.<sup>2</sup> It is not manufactured by man or sustained by man but finds its source, its sustenance, and ultimately, the measure of its impact by the sovereign will of God. Though it is important to attribute all glory to God in the midst of revival, it is also important to note that God seems to work primarily through the means of people. God's gracious response of revival is predominantly given when certain heart conditions are present in His people. God tends to respond with revival when He sees the heart characteristics that are present in 2 Chronicles 7:14.<sup>3</sup> God responds when his people come before Him in humility. He hears and responds to the pleading heart that is committed to intercessory

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<sup>1</sup> This definition has been influenced by two primary sources. The first is Robert Coleman, from his class notes on a lecture given in June, 2007 during a lecture at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina. The second part comes from the later part of a definition of revival provided by Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., *When God Comes to Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Ortlund, *When God Comes to Church*, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Revive us Again: Biblical Insights For Encouraging Spiritual Renewal* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1999), 1-7.

prayer. He renews those who are seeking His face and are repentant of their sins.

Though the movement of God is mysterious and beyond man's expectations, it is accurate to say that God tends to revive the humble, pleading, seeking, repentant heart. One should also note that this definition of revival is not proposing that these heart conditions exist on an elevated status of spirituality that is beyond the extent of the normal Christian life. Though revival is accompanied with a seasonal and exceptional surge of ministry that could only be explained by the power of the Spirit, the heart conditions that God desires and the subsequent overflow of life are God's intended way for a Christian to live.<sup>4</sup> Revival is living a restored life in alignment within the very intentions and purposes of God.

One of the purposes of God that is an overflow of revival is evangelism. This writer believes that evangelism is the process of communicating Jesus<sup>5</sup> in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God.<sup>6</sup> This definition would infer that evangelism, in its primal essence, is the simple communication of Jesus. It is pointing people to the very meaning of His name as "God saves" through Him. This message of Jesus is best communicated by words and deeds operating in perfect tandem.<sup>7</sup> Jim Peterson accentuates this as he refers to Christians by saying, "The existence of a unique people, whose lives are marked by God himself, has always been fundamental to his program of reconciling the world to himself. His people incarnate his character; they audio-visualize the nature of his eternal reign."<sup>8</sup> We communicate Jesus by being the living embodiment of Christ on earth as we constantly seek to lead people towards

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<sup>4</sup> Kaiser, *Revive us Again*, ix. from the Foreward written by Robert Coleman.

<sup>5</sup> This concept of the essence of evangelism being the mere communication of Jesus was brought to my attention through Charles Spurgeon. A great discussion of this is found in Charles H. Spurgeon, *Friend Would You Listen; selections from Around the Wicket Gate*, edited by Michael Duski (Wheaton: The Institute of Evangelism, Billy Graham Center, 1996), 19-22.

<sup>6</sup> Bill Bright, *Sharing Christ; Giving the Eternal Gift* (Peachtree City: New Life, 2004), 19-22.

<sup>7</sup> James 2:14-26.

<sup>8</sup> Jim Peterson, *Evangelism as a Lifestyle* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1981), 63.

God's redemption in Christ.<sup>9</sup> This definition would also affirm that successful evangelism could never be a mere human endeavor. It is the Holy Spirit that draws hearts to Himself. It is His power that must be infused into our evangelistic efforts and His people must go forth surrendered to Him and empowered by Him.<sup>10</sup> We can also engage in evangelism with a spirit of trustful security knowing that the ultimate results are in the hands of our sovereign God.

If evangelism centers on the communication of the saving nature of Jesus, than it is important that this is not confused with discipleship. This writer would define discipleship as the process of intentionally building people towards Christian maturity. The classic text that drives this is none other than the Great Commission in Mathew 28:16-20. Before Jesus ascended to Heaven, He charged His followers with the dominant command, "to make disciples." It would seem that Jesus chose this critical moment to reveal His intended desire for their ministry focus. The goal of ministry is not to amass great numbers of decisions, but as Herb Hodges says, to build people into "world-visionary, world-impacting, reproducing disciples."<sup>11</sup>

If revival, evangelism and discipleship are all core Biblical concepts of God's intent for ministry, one must ask the question, "How are they interrelated?" In other words, how do these great means of ministry function together? It is important to understand that all three of these aspects of ministry flow together in a cyclical pattern. Any time there is genuine revival, one of the primary indicators is that there is a stirring passion for evangelism.<sup>12</sup> If revival truly is a time when God is restoring people to His intended nature and purpose for their lives, than a natural indicator of revival would be that hearts become aligned with God's great redemptive heart for the world. These

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<sup>9</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:1-3.

<sup>10</sup> Ephesians 5:18-21.

<sup>11</sup> Herb Hodges, *Tally Ho the Fox! The Foundation for Building World-Visionary, World-Impacting, Reproducing Disciples* (Memphis: Manhattan Source, 2001), front cover.

<sup>12</sup> This is an observation that came from a lecture by Tim Beougher entitled "Great Awakenings and later revivals" in June, 2007 at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina.

people who have aligned hearts surge forward with the ministry of the Gospel and people are led to saving faith in Jesus Christ. However, this process is not intended to cease with evangelistic efforts, but instead, it must be combined with discipleship for revival to be sustained.<sup>13</sup> As people are built into Christian maturity, they begin to understand the Christ-surrendered, Spirit-empowered life that is the very means of continual spiritual renewal. The cyclical pattern repeats itself, as one of the primary indicators of this renewed life is an emphasis on evangelism that, in turn, leads to discipleship and ultimately returns to revival. It is a beautiful, interrelated process that God has intended for the follower of Christ to experience.

There are multiple Biblical examples that showcase these aspects of ministry and also display the interrelated nature of the three. This writer's favorite Biblical example is the Church of Antioch in Acts 11 and 13. Luke begins his record of the church of Antioch by telling of the great dispersion of the Jews throughout the world. He indicates that the Jews' method of evangelism was to share the message of Jesus with their fellow Jews. This pattern was repeated throughout the world until something radically different happened in Antioch.<sup>14</sup> In Antioch, the believers' evangelistic method was to share the message of Jesus with everyone they encountered. If evangelism is truly, "communicating Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God", then the different aspects of this definition should be evident in Antioch. Luke tells us in Acts 11: 20, that they were "preaching the Lord Jesus". The simple essence of their evangelism strategy seemed to be the communication of Jesus. Not only did they communicate Jesus, but Luke goes on to say in verse 21, "The hand of the Lord was with them". They were truly communicating Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. Finally, the results were something that could have only been left to God and created by God,

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<sup>13</sup> Lecture by Beougher, *Great Awakenings*, a later point in the lecture.

<sup>14</sup> Acts 11:19.

for Luke observes in verse 21, “a great many were added to the Lord.” They truly exemplified the process of communicating Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God.<sup>15</sup>

Their ministry strategy, however, did not stop at evangelism, but led to discipleship.<sup>16</sup> They were intentional about building Christians towards spiritual maturity. Luke tells us that Paul and Barnabas engaged in teaching the church for an entire year.<sup>17</sup> The people grew and matured in such a manner that they began to display Christ to the world. This was so evident that the culture was ultimately forced to create a label for this very unique group of people. They were the people that acted so much like Jesus that the pagan culture finally decided to label the disciples, “Christians”, or quite literally, “the little Christs.”<sup>18</sup>

In Antioch, they were committed to evangelism, which led to discipleship, which ultimately, helped to sustain a continued presence of revival amongst them. If revival is truly a season when God awakens a group of His people to their true nature and purpose and allows His ministry to surge forward with extraordinary power, then this definition was surely displayed in Antioch. Luke describes this church as worshipping the Lord, fasting, seeking God in prayer and being continually sensitive to the Spirit in their midst.<sup>19</sup> Their sense of continual revival had a natural overflow. The clear result was none other than evangelism.<sup>20</sup> They laid hands on two of their leaders, Paul and Barnabas, and sent them out to repeat this glorious, cyclical process of evangelism, discipleship and revival.

Another Biblical example of this process of evangelism, discipleship, and revival

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<sup>15</sup> Ken Hemphill, *The Antioch Effect; 8 Characteristics of Highly Effective Churches* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 147-180.

<sup>16</sup> Hemphill, *The Antioch Effect*, 181-204.

<sup>17</sup> Acts 11:26.

<sup>18</sup> Acts 11:27.

<sup>19</sup> Acts 13:2.

<sup>20</sup> Acts 13:3.



can be seen through Paul, Silas, and Timothy's ministry to the Thessalonians.<sup>21</sup> Paul and his ministry partners describe their evangelistic method, saying, "...our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction."<sup>22</sup> They communicated Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit and left the results to God. Not only did they begin with an evangelistic emphasis, but their ministry was also built upon intentional discipleship. Paul reveals, "For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory."<sup>23</sup> Finally, this discipleship sustained biblical revival as they lived out their true intention as God's people and experienced a season of a surge of the ministry of the Gospel. Paul remarks, "For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything."<sup>24</sup> Evangelism led to discipleship, which ultimately sustained revival in a profound way. Once again, this glorious, cyclical process is displayed and exemplified by the people of God in Scripture.

### **Revival, Evangelism, and Discipleship Throughout the History of the YMCA**

In addition to seeing this pattern of ministry in Scripture, it is helpful to see how this pattern of revival, evangelism, and discipleship has been evident throughout the history of the Young Men's Christian Association.

From its very beginnings these ministry aspects were forged into the original foundation of the YMCA. The year was 1841, and a young man by the name of George Williams received a job at a drapery firm by the name of Hitchcock and Rogers. There

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<sup>21</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Revive us Again: Biblical Insights For Encouraging Spiritual Renewal* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1999), 219-228.

<sup>22</sup> 1 Thessalonians 1:5.

<sup>23</sup> 1 Thessalonians 1:11-12.

<sup>24</sup> 1 Thessalonians 1:8.

were 140 young men in this firm and all of them worked from early in the morning to late at night. They slept in crowded, little dorm rooms above the factory that were packed with 6 men per room.<sup>25</sup> These young men were in moral disarray and William's heart was stirred with a passion for their souls. "I found no means of grace of any kind," he wrote in his diary. "I asked myself, 'What can I do for these young men?'"<sup>26</sup> He began to pray, diligently, for the salvation of his fellow employees. Eventually, he found another young believer in the factory and they began to pray, name by name for their fellow employees. They confidently believed that they would become Christians and the process of evangelism began. Later, Williams wrote in his journal, "We met, our numbers grew, and the room was soon crammed. In answer to prayer, the Spirit of God was present, and we had conversion after conversion."<sup>27</sup> Williams truly communicated Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and left the results to God. The hand of the Lord was moving in such a way that when Williams arrived at the factory in 1841, there was only one other believer present. Two years later, nearly every single individual, from the president to the lowest employee, had given his life to Christ.<sup>28</sup> In 1844, 12 of the men gathered together in an upper room and decided to call themselves the "Young Men's Christian Association." One of the men wrote in his diary that the purpose of the group was "to influence young men to spread the Redeemer's Kingdom amongst those by whom they are surrounded."<sup>29</sup> It is fascinating to observe that the global entity of the YMCA, began as a marketplace prayer and evangelism initiative. A few laypeople cared about their fellow employees in their company enough that they resolved to pray for them and to look for opportunities to share the message of Jesus with them. George

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<sup>25</sup> C. Howard Hopkins, *History of the YMCA in North America* (New York: Association Press, 1951), 4-8.

<sup>26</sup> J. E. H. Williams, *The Life of Sir George Williams, Founder of the YMCA* (New York: Association Press, 1906), 95.

<sup>27</sup> Williams, *The Life of Sir George Williams*, 96.

<sup>28</sup> Williams, *The Life of Sir George Williams*, 95-121.

<sup>29</sup> C. Howard Hopkins, *History of the YMCA in North America* (New York: Association Press, 1951), 5.

Williams and his fellow workers were new believers, had very little training, and were far from equipped to lead a movement, but the hand of the Lord tends to be upon men and women that desire to seek Him and to share Him with those that are far from Him. The YMCA truly began with a foundation of evangelism.

Though the YMCA began with an amazing surge of evangelism, it was never the intent that its ministry would end there. As many individuals gave their lives to Christ, they immediately began the process of building these Christians towards maturity. Discipleship became a primary focus. As numbers grew, they rented out a local coffee house and then a tavern named Radley's Hotel.<sup>30</sup> They opened up another branch, with a small library, and continually devoted themselves to teaching. Biblical classes were offered and lectures were given consistently. As individuals gave their lives to Christ, they were enfolded into this association of young Christians that were growing in their maturity in Christ. George M. Vanderlip was observing this group in London and wrote an article in a Boston newspaper stating,

...Not a few Christian young men of London have resolved in God's strength to accomplish these objects, viz.: 'The improvement of the spiritual and mental condition of commercial young men by the efforts of the members of the Society, in the sphere of their daily calling, by devotional meetings, biblical instruction, mutual improvement classes and the diffusion of Christian literature.'<sup>31</sup>

It is clear from this observation that evangelism truly flowed into discipleship.

As the YMCA focused on evangelism and discipleship, the only way to accurately describe the results would be to say that God allowed a mighty revival to occur. In 1851, only 6 years after it began, not only were there many more branches established in London, but the association was also found in 16 other cities in England, Scotland, and

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<sup>30</sup> Hopkins, *History of the YMCA*, 5.

<sup>31</sup> Hopkins, *History of the YMCA*, 15. Quoted from George M. VanDerlip, *The Christian Watchman and Reflector* (Boston: October 30, 1851).

Ireland.<sup>32</sup> A revival was stirring as the ministry of the Gospel surged forward.

1851 was also the year that the YMCA began in the United States. Perhaps the largest evidence of this revival can be found within this report:

... within three years virtually every major city and many smaller ones had YMCAs. Their immediate preoccupation was chiefly with evangelism, which from the beginning involved welfare and relief services. Libraries, lecture courses, and social activities that centered in 'rooms' strategically situated and attractively furnished supported the primary concern for the spiritual and moral welfare of young men adrift in the new cities...<sup>33</sup>

Within nine years, this movement launched from 12 men in a dorm room, to "every major city and many of the smaller ones" in America. These results could only be described as God granting a mighty revival and using the platform of the YMCA as an instrument to accomplish His great purposes.

This presence of revival, however, was always integrated with a commitment to evangelism and discipleship during the origins of the YMCA movement in the United States. Thomas Sullivan was a retired sea captain who heard of what God was doing through the YMCA in London and longed for a similar work of God in America.<sup>34</sup>

Sullivan had a heart for evangelism as he would walk the sea docks and hand out evangelistic tracts to seamen who were far from home and prone to temptation. He decided that his home city of Boston needed to join this evangelistic movement and he would pioneer the effort. Their ministry passion, however, didn't stop with conversion as they were utterly committed to providing spiritual growth opportunities through classes, lectures, prayer meetings, church partnerships, and relationships that sharpened one another in Christ.<sup>35</sup> Throughout the origins of the YMCA, one can truly see the beautiful integration of a passion for evangelism, a commitment to discipleship and God blessing

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<sup>32</sup> Hopkins, *History of the YMCA*, 6.

<sup>33</sup> Hopkins, *History of the YMCA*, 15.

<sup>34</sup> Hopkins, *History of the YMCA*, 17.

<sup>35</sup> Hopkins, *History of the YMCA*, 18-19.

the ministry through revival. These three aspects of ministry seem to be abundantly present in the very essence of the foundation of the organization.

As the YMCA grew in its numbers and influence, many individuals arose that carried on the God-given vision of George Williams. A man who truly exemplified a life of evangelism, discipleship and revival in and through the YMCA was D.L. Moody. After completely surrendering his life and his will to the Lord, Moody began to minister through the YMCA. He would sleep on chairs lined up under a staircase, do janitorial work to earn his keep and tell people about Jesus.<sup>36</sup> The organization recognized him as "the city missionary"<sup>37</sup> as he brought an unparalleled zeal for the Lord to all of Chicago.

Moody saw the YMCA as so much more than a building. In the name of the YMCA, he would go to the poorest of the poor to meet their needs. Dorsett reports, "He delivered buckets of coal, baskets of food, and bundles of clothing - most of it provided by men in the YMCA. Moody prayed for those he called upon, and he read Scriptures if they would permit it. Many of these people became Christians as a result of this ministry."<sup>38</sup>

Moody also had a passion to reach children for the Lord that lived in poor and broken situations. Most of the city had abandoned an area known as "The Sands" or as "Little Hell."<sup>39</sup> The children in Little Hell were mostly illiterate, did not attend school and had only a single parent who was usually a drug addict or alcoholic. Dorsett comments, "These children were emotionally and physically wounded. Often beaten, sexually abused, malnourished, and exposed to drinking, gambling, fighting, and prostitution, these youngsters were discarded and treated like the rats and other vermin that roamed their wooden shanties and tenement hovels."<sup>40</sup> The churches and missionaries of

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<sup>36</sup> Lyle W. Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls; The Life of D.L. Moody* (Chicago: Moody, 1997), 77.

<sup>37</sup> Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls*, 84.

<sup>38</sup> Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls*, 85.

<sup>39</sup> Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls*, 64.

<sup>40</sup> Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls*, 66.

Chicago would not enter "Little Hell" because of the magnitude of the danger and depravity. Even the police forces tended to stay away from this area. But unlike anyone else, Moody decided to extend the love of Christ to these kids. He rented out an old saloon and held a mission Sunday school for kids. He bribed kids with candy and pennies to come and for two hours he would give five-minute talks followed by one-minute segments of allowed rowdiness. He would then lead them in a few songs. He would continue this rhythm for the entire time.<sup>41</sup> God used this school in such an amazing way, that by the end of 1860, he had 1500 kids attending. The news about this mission school spread so rapidly that even Abraham Lincoln came and visited.<sup>42</sup> This could truly be described as no less than a revival that occurred in Little Hell!

Dorsett also speaks of D.L. Moody's great passion to not only win souls for Christ in evangelism but to build Christians. He remarks,

Moody always took the biblical view that the Great Commission (Mathew 28:18-20) calls us to make disciples, not mere converts. Consequently he labored incessantly to help people grow into strong, reproducing disciples, and he also strove to equip other men and women to become full-time workers in this broader disciple-making work of rescuing, healing, and nurturing souls.<sup>43</sup>

Moody used the gathering point of the YMCA to teach people, to host prayer meetings, and to be the central hub of his ministry in Chicago. He was passionate about the YMCA as an avenue for his own spiritual growth as well. He said, "I believe in the Young Men's Christian Association with all my heart. It has, under God, done more in developing me for Christian work than any other agency."<sup>44</sup>

Another person who used the platform of the YMCA for an amazing ministry is Oswald Chambers. His commitment to evangelism, discipleship and revival was present throughout his entire ministry. Chambers came to a crisis of full surrender to the Lord. In

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<sup>41</sup> Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls*, 73.

<sup>42</sup> Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls*, 73.

<sup>43</sup> Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls*, 23.

<sup>44</sup> Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls*, 81.

a letter to a friend he wrote, "He makes holy, He sanctifies, He does it all. All I have to do is come as a spiritual pauper, not ashamed to beg, to let go of my right to myself and act on Romans 12:1-2. It is never 'Do, do and you'll be' with the Lord, but 'Be, be, and I will do through you.'"<sup>45</sup> Oswald Chambers surrendered to the Lord and asked Him to do whatever He desired through him. God placed him in the ministry of the YMCA. When Oswald Chambers was assigned to the war in Egypt as a YMCA secretary, he immediately set up a YMCA hut that would be a spiritual gathering point. He led nightly Bible studies and used it as a place to disciple young men.<sup>46</sup> After a short time in Egypt, he wrote his wife and told her, "This area is an absolute desert in the very heart of the troops and a glorious opportunity for men. It is all immensely unlike anything I have been used to, and I am watching with interest the new things God will do and engineer."<sup>47</sup> Later Chambers decided to cancel the concerts and motion pictures that were usually shown to create more schedule time for Bible studies. Other YMCA secretaries thought that the men would quickly abandon the huts, but as McCasland points out, "Reports began filtering in to Y.M.C.A. headquarters that soldiers whom no one could accuse of being religious turned out night after night to study the Bible. The missionaries and Y.M.C.A. secretaries who dropped by Zeitoun for an evening visit were astounded to find it was true."<sup>48</sup> Chambers not only stayed in the YMCA hut, but he went to the field to minister to the needs of the soldiers.<sup>49</sup> From the wounded on the battlefield, to the eager who gathered in his hut, Chambers saw God move in the hearts of men in a profound way.

In addition to these men, the early days of the YMCA were filled with a passion for missions. The first national student summer conference occurred in 1886. Nearly two

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<sup>45</sup> David McCasland, *Abandoned to God; The Life Story of the Author of My Utmost for His Highest* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 1993), 85.

<sup>46</sup> McCasland, *Abandoned to God*, 197-227.

<sup>47</sup> McCasland, *Abandoned to God*, 213.

<sup>48</sup> McCasland, *Abandoned to God*, 220.

<sup>49</sup> McCasland, *Abandoned to God*, 215-240.

hundred and fifty students from ninety-six different colleges attended. Dwight L. Moody led the conference and challenged the students to seek God wholeheartedly. About half way through the twenty-six -day conference a few students began to meet on their own to pray for foreign missions. Some found it impossible to merely pray and not take action and decided to sign a pledge to become foreign missionaries. By the last day of the conference, ninety-nine of them signed the pledge. On the next morning, ninety-nine of them crowded together in a small room. John R. Mott was in the room and stated, "While we were kneeling in that closing period of heart-burning prayer, the hundredth man came in and knelt with us". This student missionary uprising was the beginning of many other missions' works and began the movement of the foreign work of the YMCA.<sup>50</sup>

Mott would later go on to lead the entire movement and to win the Nobel Peace Prize. In his award accepting speech, he continued to point the YMCA to Christ and to challenge the movement to serve others for Him. He stated, "In closing, let me emphasize the all-important point that Jesus Christ summed up the outstanding, unfailing, and abiding secret of all truly great and enduring leadership in the Word: 'He who would be greatest among you shall be the servant of all.'"<sup>51</sup>

Not only were individual men and women stirred with the calling of ministry through the YMCA, but associations were truly driven by a vision of ministry. During the summer of 1881, the Chicago association sponsored 500 open-air evangelistic meetings with a total attendance of over 125,000.<sup>52</sup>

The YMCA also began with a passion to help spiritual and physical needs of the communities that it served. For example, in 1867, a major cholera epidemic broke out and it was the YMCA who stepped in to aid Chicago's "untouchables" as they nursed

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<sup>50</sup> The Birmingham Family YMCA, *Brick by Brick: Rebuilding Christian Emphasis in your YMCA* (Birmingham: Self-published, 1992), 11.

<sup>51</sup> Frederick W. Haberman, ed. *Nobel Lectures 1926-1950* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1946), 7.

<sup>52</sup> Emmett Dedmon, *Great Enterprises: 100 years of the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1957), 79.



more than 60 families and performed the last rites for the dead.<sup>53</sup> The same Chicago association realized that the needs of the city were great and that many men were homeless. Therefore, in 1916, the YMCA built a hotel that had 1,821 bedrooms and was 19 stories high. The purpose of the hotel was to provide a place for men to stay as they transition from unemployment to employment. They would also help them find a job. Loring Wilbur Messer was the president of the association and guided it through these times. In building the Hotel, he stated, "The greatest sight in the world is a man. The saddest sight in the world is a wreck of a man. The noblest work in the world is the building of a man."<sup>54</sup>

In its early days, the YMCA looked for every possible platform to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. During the civil war, the YMCA looked to meet the spiritual and physical needs of the soldiers. They distributed 1,446,748 Bibles and 1,370,953 hymnbooks. They also preached 58,308 sermons and conducted 77,744 prayer meetings. They also delivered hot bread and coffee to the soldiers on the battlefield and wrote letters for the wounded soldiers. It was often a YMCA volunteer who would pen the final words to a loved one from the lips of a dying soldier. In addition to this, the YMCA opened schools for uneducated soldiers and provided many other acts of compassion.<sup>55</sup>

In 1869, the railroad that connected the East to the West was finally completed. Many pioneering young men traveled the country in search of adventure. The YMCA saw the need in the lives of these young men and set up many railroad associations. Bible classes, clean beds, and hot baths were offered at any time of the day for these railroad pioneers.<sup>56</sup> From passionate evangelists riding horseback into cities, to wartime

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<sup>53</sup> Dedmon, *Great Enterprises*, 62.

<sup>54</sup> Dedmon, *Great Enterprises*, 205.

<sup>55</sup> The Birmingham Family YMCA, *Brick by Brick: Rebuilding Christian Emphasis in your YMCA* (Birmingham: Self-published, 1992), 8-9.

<sup>56</sup> YMCA, *Brick by Brick*, 10.

huts, to homeless shelters, to revival prayer meetings over the lunch hour, the YMCA has stood strong upon its foundation of evangelism, discipleship and revival. God has used this movement to shine the light of Jesus Christ around this in an undeniable way.

### **The Dimming of the Lighthouses**

The obvious question that this writer has been agonizing over is how a movement with such passion and vibrancy for the gospel could possibly calcify into the common street perception of the neighborhood pool and workout facility. How does the community center of evangelism, discipleship and revival become the community gym and swim? Little has seemingly been written on this topic. However, a few authors lend some helpful insight into this process. Dallas Willard was once interviewed about this topic. He was asked the question, "Why do churches and ministries so often lose the essence of their founding vision, to the point that the resulting institution, years later, is quite unlike the original dream? What happens along the way?" He wrote an essay to respond to that question, entitled, "Living in the Vision of God."<sup>57</sup> Willard's basic premise is that many of the great movements of God, be it in the arenas of education, ministries or churches, often begin with a leader who has a thriving passion for God and a unique "other-worldliness" to him. The leader lives with a compelling vision of God and God seems to allow amazing effects to happen. The ministry multiplies, schools are formed, lives are transformed and amazing stories are told. These are men like Bill Bright, John R. Mott, and as it pertains to the YMCA, George Williams. In these early days, tangible results are measured and the movement attracts many people. However, a subtle shift begins to happen. As the followers seek to carry on the mission, continue the results and sustain the institution itself, these areas become the driving force rather than the original all-encompassing vision of God. Willard says, "The mission or missions that have been

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<sup>57</sup> Dallas Willard, [www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=96](http://www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=96) (accessed June 1, 2008).

set afoot begin a subtle divergence from the vision that gripped the founder, and before too long the institution and its mission has become the vision."<sup>58</sup> Ultimately, the maintaining and sustaining of the large machine that has been set in motion becomes the central focus of the workers. Harvard becomes an academic institution instead of a ministerial launch pad. The Student Volunteer Movement dies. The local church that was once seeing such God-sized results has seemingly become a mere building with a buffet of inward-focused programs. The YMCA is perceived as 14,000 workout facilities instead of 14000 global missions' outposts. The institution becomes the vision. This is the essence of institutionalism. Willard notes that just as few ministers finish well, even fewer ministries finish well.<sup>59</sup>

Paul Limbert notes that the YMCA has followed a similar pattern. He notes that their used to be a clear evangelistic focus and everything, including the buildings of the YMCA, followed that vision. Therefore, the original building was primarily a reading room and a place where young men could gather for Bible studies and discipleship appointments. In later years, there were gymnasiums and dormitories added to provide a home away from home. But as the process has continued, it has gotten further and further from the original vision.<sup>60</sup> He observes, "It is easy to see the dangers and limitations of this wide range of activities that is so characteristic of YMCAs. Leaders may get so preoccupied in promoting and directing these activities that they lose sight of the Christian purpose that first inspired the program. The YMCA tends to become a large-scale business enterprise in which economic considerations outweigh religious convictions. In operating residence halls and cafeterias, as well as in carrying on recreational programs, YMCAs are tempted to follow the prevailing patterns of commercial establishments which make no pretense of being Christian. Theodore

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<sup>58</sup> Dallas Willard, [www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=96](http://www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=96) (accessed June 1, 2008).

<sup>59</sup> Dallas Willard, [www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=96](http://www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=96) (accessed June 1, 2008).

<sup>60</sup> Paul Limbert, *Christian Emphasis in YMCA Program* (New York: Association Press, 1944), 14.

Roosevelt once said, 'The thing I like about you YMCA folks is the way you mix religion and common sense.' But all too often the religious element is so diluted that the result is a very thin mixture."<sup>61</sup>

David P. Setran contributes some very insightful thoughts to the conversation about the decline of the YMCA. He has focused much of his work upon the YMCA movement on college campuses. He notes how the college ministry began in the late 1860's and 1870's.<sup>62</sup> Even though there was a relatively small percentage of student population in the early 20th century, there were YMCA movements in 764 academic institutions by the year 1920.<sup>63</sup> Setran also notes that between 25% and 30% of all male students were members of the YMCA. In light of this, Francis Patton proclaimed, "The YMCA had achieved a near monopoly on student religious life in America."<sup>64</sup> Before Campus Crusade, Navigators, Inter Varsity, or any other campus movement, it was the YMCA that was responsible for campus ministry to students.

However, there were three distinct eras to the YMCA movement that lend insight to the mission drift. Setran notes that there was a first era that spans from about 1858 to 1888 and was led by the primary leader, Luther Wishard. The movement had a clear focus of evangelism, discipleship and spiritual awakening during these years. To be a part of the YMCA meant that you were involved in a movement that was winning lost students for Christ, discipling them into maturity, sending them to reach the lost and praying for spiritual awakening. It maintained a solid, evangelical theology and was passionate about its mission to win students for Jesus Christ.<sup>65</sup>

The second era was led by John Mott, who served as leader from about 1888 to 1915. Though he accomplished tremendous fruit for the kingdom of God, there were

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<sup>61</sup> Limbert, *Christian Emphasis*, 14.

<sup>62</sup> David P. Setran, *The College "Y", Student religion in an era of secularization* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 3.

<sup>63</sup> Setran, *The College "Y"*, 4.

<sup>64</sup> Setran, *The College "Y"*, 4.

<sup>65</sup> Setran, *The College "Y"*, 5.

some subtle shifts of focus that began to happen. Setran notes, "There was an emerging desire to pursue, not primarily student salvation, but rather the development of character and service."<sup>66</sup> The focus became behavior over belief. Their reputation amongst universities soared as they focused less on theology and more on service and Christian living. This was the era where the YMCA began to provide housing, recreation, and employment services for universities. Though much good happened, the subtle mission drift would have tremendous implications. In this writer's opinion, it was as if they went through an "emerging church" type shift within their core ideologies. They became successful in meeting people's needs and serving others, but the definition of evangelistic success waned in the background.

The third era began when Mott left and World War 1 began. David Porter led the associations. This period stretched from 1915 to about 1934, and it saw profound changes. Students began to focus on Christian social reconstruction and having correct viewpoints on the war, racism and economic injustice. The movement lost sight of its original theological foundations and its passionate focus on evangelism. Hence, the movement went from Evangelism and Discipleship, to Christian character and service, to Christian social reconstruction.<sup>67</sup> In June of 1925, there was a foundational shift that was symptomatic of this pattern of decline. In Estes Park, Colorado, 400 delegates gathered for the Third Assembly of YMCA Workers with Boys. Their theme was new frontiers and one of their conclusions was, "We have come to feel that personal evangelism is not a thing of a moment, a single commitment or decision, but it is a life process, a process of being and doing--- a development rather than a decision of a moment."<sup>68</sup> To reference a previous metaphor, in a slow and subtle way, thousands of lighthouses have become

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<sup>66</sup> Setran, *The College "Y"*, 5.

<sup>67</sup> Setran, *The College "Y"*, 6.

<sup>68</sup> The Birmingham Family YMCA, *Brick by Brick: Rebuilding Christian Emphasis in your YMCA* (Birmingham: Self-published, 1992), 16-17.

detached from their solid foundation of rock. Their lights have dimmed. They float upon the current cultural waves like houseboats tossed amongst the sea.

### **A Pattern of Ministry Institutionalism Through the Lens of the YMCA**

This writer has observed, through countless books and many examples, that the path to institutionalism is a progression from Man to Mission to Movement to Machine to Monument. In the realm of many ministries and particularly the YMCA, this general pattern has been present. The YMCA began with a man and a group of men whose hearts were totally devoted to God. They humbly sought His face and pleaded with Him to move in mighty ways. They followed a God-given mission that incorporated evangelism, discipleship and radical surrender. God was pleased with their hearts and responded with God-given revival. Results rapidly multiplied until a movement quickly formed that spread across the planet. However, with wonderful results and the passing on of this movement to other generations of leaders, there grew subtle pressure to sustain these results. The programs, budgets, buildings and statistics became the central focus. The passion of the movement shifted from pleasing God to pleasing people through better facilities and strategic programs. In short, the results became the mission itself. The natural consequence of this type of action is that this movement became a large machine. This machine is in full operation as one of the largest global forces on Earth. More than 40 million members consistently walk through the doors of the YMCA and there are countless others who sign up for programs, sports, and childcare. But the mission, itself, is gradually becoming a mere phrase that was carved into stone signs and printed on banners. It resides in dusty, yellowed books in the archives of old libraries and in legal documents that are never read, but only filed away. If God doesn't intervene, the mission of the YMCA is in danger of becoming a monument.

Though the YMCA has painfully spiraled down the path from Man to Mission to Movement to Machine to Monument, there is no need to despair. The very passion of God is still, as always, to bring forth revival. He still looks for humble, pleading, seeking, repentant hearts that are willing to be totally surrendered to Him. Though the light has dimmed within many of the 14,000 lighthouses, "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."<sup>69</sup> As later chapters of this thesis will explore, this movement can and will experience God's renewal once again. C. Howard Hopkins began his work on the history of the YMCA of North America, by commenting, "A fresh embodiment of the Christian ethic has come into being whenever the Christian religion has burst the bonds of institutionalism and overflowed as a new and vital movement."<sup>70</sup> It is time, once again, for the bonds of this institution to be broken forth! It is time for a new and vital movement to overflow! It is time for the world, once again, through the platform of the YMCA, to experience the Light of Jesus shining to the ends of the Earth!

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<sup>69</sup> John 1:5.

<sup>70</sup> C. Howard Hopkins, *History of the YMCA in North America* (New York: Association Press, 1951),

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

When a group of people realizes that their local YMCA is meant to be a lighthouse for Christ and, subsequently, embark upon the vision of re-lighting their lighthouse, there are many resources that are helpful to this process. There are three major categories of resources that this writer considers to be the most critical in fulfilling this vision. This writer will, first and foremost, examine the books that have been written about the history and mission of the YMCA. Secondly, the writer will discuss the multiple resources that focus upon the ministry functions of revival, evangelism and discipleship, with a particular view to how these ministry functions operate together to renew a YMCA. Finally, this chapter will conclude with an examination of resources that are helpful in developing healthy churches within YMCAs.

#### **YMCA Resources**

For one to truly understand the past, present and future work of God through the movement of the YMCA, it is essential to have a working knowledge of the books that have been written about the YMCA. When it comes to writing on the topic of the YMCA, there are a few different categories to be considered. There are books that chronicle the broad history of the movement, books that focus on the history of individual associations and books that are biographical in nature, focusing on individual workers within the YMCA. In addition to these categories, there are specific YMCA handbooks and books of instruction written to train YMCA employees to be more effective in fulfilling their mission. Finally, there are books that talk about general principles of institutionalism that can be applied, specifically, to the YMCA. A brief analysis of books in each of these categories will be considered.



## Historical Works

The first general category of YMCA books to be examined are those that keep historical records of the movement itself. One of the most helpful writers is the historian C. Howard Hopkins. No other writer examines the early foundations of the YMCA of North America with the same degree of depth as Hopkins. He gives a careful and precise history of the movement with a specific focus upon the first 100 years in North America.<sup>1</sup> He begins his work with a profound insight as he states, "A fresh embodiment of the Christian ethic has come into being whenever the Christian religion has burst the bonds of institutionalism and overflowed as a new and vital movement."<sup>2</sup> This is insightful as he was referring to the original context from which the YMCA was birthed, however; this writer also believes that this statement prophetically envisions the current context of the YMCA. "The bonds of institutionalism" must be broken again.

In addition to Hopkins, the best work that has been done in recording the global movement of the YMCA has been done by Kenneth Scott Latourette entitled, "*World Service*."<sup>3</sup> Latourette tells the story of how the YMCA spread through each of the countries of the world. In introducing the book, He captures the magnitude of the potential of the YMCA as he reflects about the book,

It is the summons to tell the story of an enterprise which embraces the majority of the earth's inhabitants. If it were to fulfill its purpose it would be an account of how a mere handful of men, never in any one year in time of peace numbering as many as three hundred, sought by means, some of them novel, to join with their fellows in other nations in changing the lives of millions of youth and molding the future of nations.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> C. Howard Hopkins, *History of the YMCA in North America* (New York: Association Press, 1951).

<sup>2</sup> Hopkins, *History of the YMCA*, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, *World Service* (New York: Association Press, 1957).

<sup>4</sup> Latourette, *World Service*, 3.

In addition to these broad historical works, L.L. Doggett engages in a detailed account of the first 10 years. He boldly summarizes this first decade of ministry by stating, "The first period may be characterized as the introduction of the Association idea—the extension of Christ's Kingdom among young men by young men!"<sup>5</sup> He also captures the evangelistic emphasis of this first period by stating, "Above all this, it was an evangelistic force which aimed at the regeneration of men."<sup>6</sup> This book plays a significant role in the establishment of the foundation of the YMCA. In a modern era where much of the past is being re-written, this book stands as an unwavering pillar of truth.

Beyond these historical accounts, another significant work that was crafted in a slightly different way is Andrea Hinding's, *Proud Heritage*.<sup>7</sup> Hinding captures the history of the YMCA of the United States in pictures. This book is unique in its kind and is really help to bring a sense of reality where words often fall short.

In addition to the historical books that attempt to give a broad perspective of the movement throughout the world or throughout North America, there have also been some key works that chronicle individual associations. These books are incredibly helpful as local associations are able to see and to replicate the work that specific YMCAs have undertaken.

One such book focuses on the Chicago association.<sup>8</sup> Emmett Dedmon tells the great story of 100 years of evangelistic initiatives, service opportunities and exciting risks that were taken for God's kingdom. He writes of many individuals who trusted the Lord

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<sup>5</sup> L. L. Doggett, *History of the Young Men's Christian Association: Vol. 1. The Founding Of The Association* (New York: The International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations, 1896), 180.

<sup>6</sup> Doggett, *History of the Young Men's Christian Association*, 180.

<sup>7</sup> Andrea Hinding, *Proud Heritage: A History in Pictures of the YMCA in the United States* (Norfolk: The Donning Company, 1988).

<sup>8</sup> Emmett Dedmon, *Great Enterprises: 100 years of the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1957).

and saw great results. Great men like Dwight L. Moody, John V. Harwell and Loring Wilbur Messer guided this association to follow Christ with all of their heart.

Similarly, *An Event on Mercer Street*<sup>9</sup> is the history of the YMCA of New York. This book is not an exhaustive history of the city movement but it does give a taste how George Petrie had a God-given desire to begin the movement in New York. He put something in motion that led to countless Bible Studies, classes, and church partnerships. Ultimately, when a group of businessmen began meeting at the YMCA of New York for lunch hour prayer meetings, God put His hand of blessing on the association and it became the epicenter of a massive national revival. This small story gives great encouragement to what God is able to do.

A final helpful book that focuses on an individual association is L.L. Dogget's work, *History of the Boston Young Men's Christian Association*.<sup>10</sup> This work is helpful not in its abundance of inspiring stories or its counsel for other associations, but merely as a means to see God at work through the continual, every day life of an association that is committed to the Lord and His work.

### Significant Biographies

Another category of YMCA resources that are significant to understand this movement would be the biographies of some of its greatest leaders. This author believes that the most significant biographies are the life stories of George Williams, Dwight L. Moody, John R. Mott and Oswald Chambers. Each of these men lived in different time periods and were used, by God, in different ways. However, all of these men made a mighty impact for God's kingdom through the YMCA.

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<sup>9</sup> Terry Donoghue, *An Event on Mercer Street: A brief History of the YMCA of the City of New York* (New York: Privately Printed, 1953).

<sup>10</sup> L.L. Dogget, *History of the Boston Young Men's Christian Association* (Boston: The Young Men's Christian Association, 1901).

The first and foremost biography that contributes to the movement of the YMCA is none other than the book written on the life of George Williams by J. E. Hodder Williams.<sup>11</sup> This book is comprehensive and inspiring as it chronicles the man that God used to launch this movement. The reader experiences his family life, his early days, his calling, and the birth of a movement that God has advanced to the ends of the earth. Perhaps its biggest contribution is simply a continual glimpse of his inner life. The author explains,

In order to appraise and understand a man's work you must know something not only of his environment but of his personality, of that inner life through which and in which the work first has its being. This young man from the country was chosen of God to start an unique and wonderful movement in the world.<sup>12</sup>

This book stretches from the beginning of the movement until the early 1900s when Williams was old and frail. Some of his last public words were spoken at the Paris Convention. He was too weak to even stand and speak so someone read these words to the crowd of YMCA workers. He stated,

My word to you tonight would be 'Go Forward.' Expect great things from God. Next to the peace and joy which have come to me through my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, my greatest happiness has been found in the work of the Association. I would, therefore, urge upon all young men to give themselves, body, soul, and spirit, to the Savior who loved them and died for them, and to spend their lives in seeking to extend His kingdom. Thus shall come to them satisfaction and peace in this world and eternal glory in the life to come.<sup>13</sup>

A second biography that this writer would consider to be incredibly significant to the story of the YMCA is the life of D. L. Moody.<sup>14</sup> This book is remarkably inspiring as it reveals all that Moody did in and through the YMCA in Chicago and beyond. Dorsett remarks, "Moody, on the other hand, with the energy of two or three normal men and a

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<sup>11</sup> J. E. Hodder Williams, *The Life of Sir George Williams: Founder of the Young Men's Christian Association* (Amsterdam: Fredonia books, 2003).

<sup>12</sup> Williams, *The Life of Sir George Williams*, 3.

<sup>13</sup> Williams, *The Life of Sir George Williams*, 313-314.

<sup>14</sup> Lyle W. Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls: The Life of D. L. Moody* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1997).

vision for the rescue and nurture of souls unmatched by anyone in the Windy City, lived in the headquarters and gave fifteen to twenty hours a day to the work.”<sup>15</sup>

Alongside with the life stories of Moody and Williams, John R. Mott was one of the most important individuals that the YMCA has ever had at the helm of its leadership. C. Howard Hopkins has written the most thorough and detailed account of his life.<sup>16</sup> This contributes to the story of the YMCA because through the lens of an individual one sees the scope of the global movement of this ministry. Mott mobilized and inspired masses of people to redirect their lives, through the vehicle of the YMCA, to global missions.

A final helpful biography is the story of Oswald Chambers.<sup>17</sup> Not only is his biography devotionally rich and inspiring, but it gives a great glimpse of the war-time efforts of the YMCA. Chambers operated a war-time hut where he led Bible studies, gave lectures and ministered to soldiers who were in desperate need of hope. This biography takes a popular Christian leader and shows how he served through one the YMCAs most consistent avenues of ministry.

### Handbooks and Training Books

Alongside of historical and biographical accounts, there is much that can be understood about the heartbeat of this movement from studying the handbooks and training manuals that were used to equip YMCA employees. There were often bold statements that would define the very purpose of a YMCA association and a YMCA employee. In 1903, there was a handbook created to shape the principles and methods for YMCA employees. The opening paragraph is critical to the entire work as it previews the entire book by stating,

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<sup>15</sup> Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls*, 84.

<sup>16</sup> C. Howard Hopkins, *John R. Mott: A Biography* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979).

<sup>17</sup> David McCasland, *Abandoned to God: The Life Story of the Author of My Utmost for His Highest* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 1993).

The Young Men's Christian Association differs from merely recreative, educational, and ethical movements by its pervading spiritual intent and its aggressive religious activity. The making of Christian men through faith in and complete self-surrender to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord is its controlling purpose.<sup>18</sup>

Another significant training handbook was produced in 1912. This one holds considerable value as the book clearly defines the most important attributes of a YMCA employee. As previously quoted, it boldly proclaims,

Above all, we need men of deep religious faith, filled with the conviction that Jesus Christ is the answer to the deepest needs alike of the individual and of society, men whose meat and drink it will be to do their Lord's work of awakening other men to the Divine call of sonship and service.<sup>19</sup>

These YMCA leaders believed that the core purpose of a YMCA employee was to meet the deepest needs of young men and women with the answer of Jesus Christ.

There have also been other books that the YMCA has either produced or heavily endorsed as they have trained their employees in evangelism. One book is called, *Taking Men Alive: Studies in the Principles and Practice of Individual Soul-Winning* by Charles Trumbull.<sup>20</sup> This book agonizes over the fact that every man and woman will be "taken alive" in a spiritual sense. It gives many evangelistic principles on how to effectively engage in evangelism with people who are far from God. The significance of this book is not merely found in the fact that it helps to equip young men in effective evangelism, but that it was a core handbook for training employees of the YMCA. John R. Mott also wrote a noteworthy book entitled, *Confronting Young Men with the Living*

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<sup>18</sup> E. F. See, *Religious Work for Men; Principles and Methods* (New York: The International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations, 1903), 7.

<sup>19</sup> The International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations, *Principles & Methods of Religious Work For Men and Boys* (New York: Association Press, 1912), 11.

<sup>20</sup> Charles Trumbull, *Taking Men Alive: Studies in the Principles and Practices of Soul-Winning* (New York: Revell, 1938).

*Christ*.<sup>21</sup> This book contributes to the overall mission of the YMCA as Mott continually refers to a YMCA association as being successful, if and only if, it succeeds in effectively and consistently presenting people with Christ as the fundamental answer to all of life.

### **The Path to Institutionalism**

Beyond the story of the YMCA and its workers, an important topic that helps to frame the history and the future renewal of the YMCA is the path to institutionalization. This writer refers to this process as the path from “Man” to “Mission” to “Movement” to “Machine” to “Monument”. This writer’s thoughts on this progression have been influenced by multiple sources, but as one surveys the landscape of opinions on this matter, there are several resources that this writer feels are the most helpful.

This writer believes that one of the more helpful articles written on this subject is by Dallas Willard. He was once interviewed about this topic and was asked the question, “Why do churches and ministries so often lose the essence of their founding vision, to the point that the resulting institution, years later, is quite unlike the original dream? What happens along the way?” He wrote an essay to respond to that question, entitled, *Living in the Vision of God*.<sup>22</sup> Willard’s conviction is that many of the great movements of God begin with a person or a group of people that have a deep passion for the Lord and hearts of surrender. The leader lives with a compelling vision of God and, in turn, amazing God-sized stories seem to happen. In these early days, results are obvious, a movement grows and many people are attracted. However, as the years progress and, specifically, the handoff to the next wave of leaders occur, a subtle shift begins to happen. As the followers seek to carry on the mission, continue the results and sustain

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<sup>21</sup> John R. Mott, *Confronting Young Men with the Living Christ* (New York: Association Press, 1923), 13.

<sup>22</sup> Dallas Willard, [www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=96](http://www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=96) (accessed June 1, 2008).

the institution itself, these areas become the driving force rather than the original all-encompassing vision of God. Willard says, "The mission or missions that have been set afoot begin a subtle divergence from the vision that gripped the founder, and before too long the institution and its mission has become the vision."<sup>23</sup> Willard observes that the essence of institutionalism is when the institution becomes the vision. Willard also laments over the fact that just as few ministers finish well, even fewer ministries finish well.

This concept is not only seen in ministries, but it is often replicated in the business world. Ichak Adizes wrote an insightful book entitled *The Pursuit of Prime*.<sup>24</sup> His premise is that all companies follow a similar lifecycle as a human being. There are many stages of aging such as an infancy, adolescence, stability, recrimination, and ultimately, death.<sup>25</sup> He offers 11 total stages and offers many descriptions of characteristics present in each of them. When a company or a ministry reaches "prime" that is the key moment where it is functioning with the greatest blend of vision, commitment, healthy leadership and vibrancy. When a company leaves this stage it begins to age.<sup>26</sup> These stages are helpful in understanding the path to institutionalization for the YMCA.

Aubrey Malphurs is another author who delves into similar logic by offering many good business principles from the world of strategic planning and translating them into the world of ministry planning for the long-term health of a church or ministry. He explains the "S" curve phenomenon<sup>27</sup> and talks about how every form of life begins, grows, plateaus and ultimately, dies. He explains that ministries are no different and he

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<sup>23</sup> Dallas Willard, [www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=96](http://www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=96) (accessed June 1, 2008).

<sup>24</sup> Ichak Adizes, *The Pursuit of Prime: Maximize Your Company's Success With The Adizes Program* (Santa Monica: Knowledge Exchange, 1996).

<sup>25</sup> Adizes, *The Pursuit of Prime*, 9-14.

<sup>26</sup> Adizes, *The Pursuit of Prime*, 121-142.

<sup>27</sup> Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A new model for church and ministry leaders*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids: Baker books, 2005), 5.



offers advice on how to keep continual renewal and long-term health. He focuses on certain principles such as the importance of establishing core values, building a cohesive team and communicating clear vision.

Perhaps the most helpful work for translating these concepts into the history of the YMCA movement has been done by David P. Setran. Though he focuses much of his work upon the YMCA movement that was present on college campuses, he contributes some very insightful thoughts to the conversation about the decline of the YMCA.<sup>28</sup> He chronicles three distinct periods of time and the subtle shifts from Evangelism and Discipleship, to Christian character and service, to Christian social reconstruction.<sup>29</sup> Each of these books lends insight to the process of institutionalization that has occurred in the movement of the YMCA.

### **Revival, Evangelism and Discipleship**

The second major category of books that have a significant connection with this project are books that focus on revival, evangelism and discipleship. For the institution of the YMCA to be renewed to its original mission and potential, it must experience local and global revival. A primary fruit of this revival will be a renewed passion for evangelism. The sustaining of this renewed movement will only occur with a commitment to discipleship. Therefore, the interrelated nature of these three aspects of ministry are foundational for the local and global renewal of the YMCA.

### **Revival**

The first category of literature that lends insight towards the renewal of this

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<sup>28</sup> David P. Setran, *The College "Y", Student religion in an era of secularization* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>29</sup> Setran, *The College "Y"*, 6.

movement is resources devoted to revival. For the YMCA to one day be a movement of 14,000 shining lighthouses, it will only be the result of the reviving work of God. This literature review will explore some key works that focus on the nature of revival and the cause of revival.

### **What is Revival?**

A good starting point on the topic of revival is to come to a clear understanding of what the word, “revival” actually means. Walter Kaiser’s book, *Revive us Again: Biblical Insights for Encouraging Spiritual Renewal*<sup>30</sup>, provides some key insights to this definition. In the foreword of this book, Robert Coleman defines revival as, “The restoration of something to its true nature and purpose. Inasmuch as all of us were made to glorify God, revival simply fulfills his desire that we might know him in the fullness of his Spirit and declare his praise to the ends of the earth.”<sup>31</sup> Part of the significance of this definition is that the revived heart is God’s intended purpose for the Christian life. It is the normal state of being for the believer. The rest of the book chronicles the Biblical accounts of revival and the Biblical causes of revival, but the entire book is built upon the rationale that the heart attributes that are conducive with revival are God’s normal, intended way of life for the believer. It is encouraging within the ministry of the YMCA to realize that an effort to renew the Y is simply to call the movement back to God’s intended purposes.

Raymond Ortlund aligns with Kaiser but takes the definition of “revival” to a level that goes beyond the normal experience of the Christian life in his book, *When God Comes to Church*.<sup>32</sup> The definition he offers states, “Revival is a season in the life of the

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<sup>30</sup> Walter Kaiser, *Revive us Again: Biblical Insights for Encouraging Spiritual Renewal* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1999).

<sup>31</sup> Kaiser, *Revive us Again*, ix.

<sup>32</sup> Raymond C. Ortlund Jr., *When God Comes to Church: A Biblical Model of Revival Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000).

church when God causes the normal ministry of the gospel to surge forward with extraordinary spiritual power.”<sup>33</sup> Ortlund makes it clear that revival is within the normal charge of ministry, yet, “What sets revival apart is simply that our usual efforts greatly accelerate in their spiritual effects. God hits the fast-forward button. And this blessing spills out from the church to wash over the nations with an ingathering of many new converts to Christ.”<sup>34</sup> Ortlund’s definition could be used to make sense of the many seasons when God has chosen to accelerate His work throughout the YMCA. It also is encouraging towards the future renewal of the YMCA in the sense that it is our work to pursue the right heart attitudes before the Lord and to simply trust that God will be the one to send revival in His timing. When men and women live the Christian life like God intended them to live and God chooses to bless a particular season with an outpouring of His grace, this will indicate revival. In other words, it will be the amazing work of God amidst the normal work of men.

### **What Causes Revival?**

If God desires that His people would experience revival, then a second critical question emerges in this dialogue. The question is none other than, “What causes revival?” Many authors would insert, here, that this is primarily not a “what” question but a “who” question. Jonathan Edwards would passionately say that the cause of Revival is God! He entitled an essay, *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God*,<sup>35</sup> and passionately proclaimed that the work was totally a work of God. He continually reflected on the fact that God is able to accomplish as much in a short amount of time as man could possibly accomplish in a great amount of time. Throughout his writings, he is very careful to attribute everything that happened in the Great Awakening to God and God

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<sup>33</sup> Ortlund, *When God Comes to Church*, 9.

<sup>34</sup> Ortlund, *When God Comes to Church*, 9.

<sup>35</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint, 1965).

alone. This is encouraging as it takes the pressure off of the need to “accomplish much for God” in YMCA ministry.

Attributing the cause of revival to God is the attitude that Billy Graham has chosen to display as He describes what has happened throughout his years of ministry. In his autobiography, *Just as I Am*<sup>36</sup>, the theme that seems to rise throughout all of his crusades is quite simply that they were a work of God. Nearly all definitions of revival would include the crusades that He has led as prime examples of God pouring forth His grace in extraordinary revival-type ways. Yet, Graham continually mentions, throughout many places in the book, that he was very simple in his approach. He used no powers of persuasion or manipulation. It was his goal to not be overly dramatic or ever even draw attention to himself. He simply attempted to preach the clear, unaltered Gospel and left the results in God's hands. His book looks back at the end of every mighty story, and simply concludes that God did it.

In sharp contrast to these men, Charles Finney would respond to “the cause of revival” question quite differently. Instead of attributing the primary work of revival to God, he would attribute the primary role to man. In *The Fruit of Revival*, he states, “In truth a revival should be expected whenever it is needed. If we need to be revived it is our duty to be revived. If it is duty it is possible, and we should set about being revived ourselves.”<sup>37</sup>

Finney seems to have an “if you build it, it will come” mentality. He continually talks about revival as something that is a Christian's “duty” to produce. In addition to this, not only is his “who” question answered in terms of man, but he also spends much time talking about “what” causes a revival. He minimizes the divine actions of God and tends to reduce a revival down to a mechanical process. In his lectures on Revival, he

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<sup>36</sup> Billy Graham, *Just as I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham* (New York: Harper Collins, 1998).

<sup>37</sup> Charles Finney, *The Fruit of Revival* (Wheaton: Billy Graham Center, IOE, 2000), 20-21.

states, "A revival is not a miracle, nor dependent on a miracle, in any sense. It is purely the philosophical result of the right use of the constituted means—as much so as any other effect produced by the application of means."<sup>38</sup> Finney's belief of the right means constituted everything from keeping the children quiet to having the right form of ventilation in a room.

Richard Lovelace is another voice that has given significant insight to the cause of revival. He would react to this man-centered theology of Finney. In fact, he would call his manipulation of means to produce responses, "an ugly deformity of Christian practice resulting from bad doctrine."<sup>39</sup> In contrast, Lovelace would say that there is a primary element involved in spiritual renewal and it causes renewal to be continuous in experience. He says that, "The proclamation of the Gospel in depth is the most important condition of the renewal of the Church."<sup>40</sup> He believes that a true understanding of all of the implications of justification and the appropriate focus upon sanctification will align men and women under God's plan of continual renewal. Lovelace states that, "Christians truly have to understand justification. They need to daily realize an awareness of God's holiness, the depth of their sin, and the sufficiency of the atoning work of Jesus Christ for their acceptance with God."<sup>41</sup> This life-altering understanding can organically affect all areas of one's life and produce gratefulness, joy, passion, and a genuinely renewed heart. Therefore, as the true gospel is preached, hearts are revived.

A final approach to determining the cause of Revival is to simply let the Biblical examples speak for themselves. In *Revive us Again*, Walter Kaiser breaks down the major revivals in the Old Testament and concludes, in contrast to Finney, that the primary mover in revival is God. He states, "there can be no revival without the Lord's

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<sup>38</sup> Charles Finney, *Revivals of Religion* (New York: Revell, n.d.), 5.

<sup>39</sup> Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life; An Evangelical Theology of Renewal* (Downers Grove: IVP Press, 1979), 106.

<sup>40</sup> Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 145.

<sup>41</sup> Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 102.

initiating it and carrying it out.”<sup>42</sup> Kaiser makes it clear that God should receive all the glory for His work. He also adds, however, that we cannot hide behind the doctrine of God as an excuse for a lack of revival. Kaiser spends much of his book talking about the essential heart conditions that man must have that are conducive to God responding in revival. He uses 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 7:14 as the primary text that identifies these conditions. If God’s people will humble themselves, commit themselves to intercessory prayer, seek the very face of God, and turn from their wicked ways in Biblical repentance, then the heart will be ready for God to do His work if He so wills. He points out that this is the message of Hosea to the people when he tells them to “break up their fallow ground.”<sup>43</sup> When the soil of the human heart is hardened and full of unwanted growth, God chooses not to produce a harvest of fruit. But when the human heart is plowed, cleared, tilled, and usable, then God may just choose to renew a mighty kingdom harvest in that soil. Kaiser adds the key insight that each of these four heart conditions form the outline of 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles and show us how God responded to each of five Judean Kings.

When it comes to these different perspectives on the cause of revival, this author believes that it is best to operate in a mode that gives God all glory for any work that happens, while simultaneously, intentionally pursuing the heart attitudes that God has called us to have. Our focus needs not be on Finney-like means to produce a revival, and yet we are called to be in constant pursuit of humility, seeking the heart of God, prayerful intercession, and Biblical repentance.

### Evangelism

When genuine revival happens, a steadfast indicator is a renewed passion for

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<sup>42</sup> Walter Kaiser, *Revive us Again: Biblical Insights for Encouraging Spiritual Renewal* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1999), 15.

<sup>43</sup> Kaiser, *Revive us Again*, 7.

evangelism. The natural overflow of a heart that is renewed before the Lord is to align with the very heart of God by joining Him in His rescue mission in the world. As the YMCA experiences renewal, it will become a community center of evangelism once again.

Michael Green, in *Evangelism in the Early Church*<sup>44</sup>, brilliantly chronicles how a group of uneducated, unprepared, undistinguished men experienced a genuine renewal and then, simply and profoundly, spread the message to the ends of the world. He states, "What was remarkable was their conviction, their passion and their determination to act as Christ's embassy to a rebel world, whatever the consequences."<sup>45</sup> Their renewed hearts were gripped by the greatness of their Savior. He was their motivation. Green marvels,

Indeed, it is the motivation of these men and women which impresses us more than their methods. Their moving allegiance to God, their profound sense of discovery, their deep concern for their Christless fellows drove them out into unrelenting service in the cause of the Gospel.<sup>46</sup>

He also notes how they were a group of men that were totally surrendered to the work of the Holy Spirit to guide them, empower them, and lead them according to the will of God. They were a group that was revived by the Spirit, empowered by the Spirit, and then continually surrendered to the Spirit to direct their every act of ministry. Their passion for evangelism was truly an overflow of revival!

Though the Spirit was the power source, Green tells us that the Gospel that the early Church spread was simply "Jesus". Their continuous dialogue was to show a hurting, depraved, empty world that Jesus was the single answer.<sup>47</sup> In YMCA ministry,

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<sup>44</sup> Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970).

<sup>45</sup> Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 23.

<sup>46</sup> Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 386.

<sup>47</sup> Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 81.

Christ was, at one point, the center of the movement. This book calls a ministry focus back to the roots of being radically Christo-centric in thoughts, words, and actions.

Another profound insight that has emerged in this revival-inspired evangelism of the early Church was their ability to communicate the message to various cultures.

Green marvels at their ability to do that and says,

They did not accommodate the gospel to the culture of the day. They did however move the good news out of its original Jewish dress and put Gentile clothes on it without compromising its content. Modern Christians have much to learn from their ingenuity, their fidelity and their enculturation.<sup>48</sup>

As each YMCA mirrors the specific cultural context in which it is placed, it is insightful to clarify that one must not compromise content, but must creatively attempt to clothe the message according to the culture in which it resides.

Richard Lovelace would accentuate these comments by saying,

The kingdom of God which has been established is not an earthly cultural and political organization but a process of spiritual transformation energized by the Holy Spirit using the catalyst of the gospel message which will spread like leaven among all cultures. The message must therefore be disenculturated, freed from its protective shell, so that it may take root in a thousand different cultural and political soils and bring them to full self-expression.<sup>49</sup>

Again, people must be challenged and trained to take an unchanging message to an ever-changing culture.

One of the great examples that not only reflects this mentality but also lends much insight into how to communicate the Gospel to a post-modern world is described in *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*<sup>50</sup> by George Hunter. Here again, was a man (Patrick) that was genuinely renewed and the natural overflow of that renewal was to communicate the gospel with lost people. Hunter describes how the Gospel intersected with a

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<sup>48</sup> Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 19.

<sup>49</sup> Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life; An Evangelical Theology of Renewal* (Downers Grove: IVP Press, 1979), 186.

<sup>50</sup> George G. Hunter III, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity Can Reach the West... Again* (Nashville: Abington, 2000), 95-121.



barbarian, secular, feeling-driven, yet spiritually receptive culture. It was not dismissed as irrelevant, but instead it brought a radical transformation. Patrick and his followers put the unchanging message of Jesus into the cultural context of the Celtic way of life. Likewise, as we approach this post-modern culture that eerily mirrors so much of the Barbarian, desensitized, feeling-driven culture that Patrick faced, we need to be willing to speak the language of a new generation without adulterating the message of the cross.

D. James Kennedy offers an additional approach that has, undoubtedly, been used by God to win many souls to the Kingdom. This writer has great appreciation and respect for the fruit that has been produced by the methods within, *Evangelism Explosion*.<sup>51</sup> With this in mind, however, this writer has struggled with some of the methodology proposed in this book. Much of the Evangelism Explosion approach seems to, unintentionally, be quite similar to a home sales visit. The reader is instructed, "Do dangle the bait in front of the prospect. Do not shove the hook down his throat."<sup>52</sup> The reader is also told to, "Listen to your prospect talk so that you can intelligently refer to statements he has made as you make your presentation."<sup>53</sup> Even calling a person a "prospect" seems to minimize the reality of having an authentic relationship where one should show love in an incarnational way to an individual. Much time is also spent on how to be attractive and well groomed. He says, "Do ask a friend if you have bad breath, and encourage an honest answer. If you have it, do something to get rid of it or your prospect will be thinking of ways to get rid of you!"<sup>54</sup> One can appreciate the heart attitude that is present here, but this writer is also a little turned off by the focus.

Much of the book also provides scripts that can be memorized and strategies to drive everything towards the two important questions that are the essence of every

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<sup>51</sup> D. James Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1971).

<sup>52</sup> Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, 108.

<sup>53</sup> Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, 108.

<sup>54</sup> Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, 109.

successful evangelistic home visit. The, “Are you 100% certain?” question and the “If you were to die today, why would God let you in?” question seem to be the pivot point of every gospel presentation.<sup>55</sup> This writer really believes that these questions are helpful and that it is also a good thing to have basic guidelines that can direct people in an evangelistic encounter. However, as one engages the post-Christian culture of the YMCA, this writer feels that this approach will lack long term effectiveness.

A similar heart attitude, yet a drastically different approach to Evangelism Explosion methods is present in Joe Aldrich’s book, *Life Style Evangelism: Crossing Traditional Boundaries to Reach the Unbelieving World*<sup>56</sup>. Aldrich notes that a cause of our weakened evangelistic enterprise is,

the imbalance between the verbalization and the incarnation of the gospel. Christians are to be good news before they share the good news. The words of the gospel are to be incarnated before they are verbalized... The music of the gospel must precede the words of the gospel and prepare the context in which there will be a hunger for those words.<sup>57</sup>

The “home visit to a stranger method” seems to pay very little attention to preparing the context of the gospel. Aldrich passionately teaches us the key insight that Christians must authentically serve and therefore, become the good news that the lost world is longing for. This process causes unbelieving friends to be drawn to the gospel presence, which then creates receptivity within their hearts to hear truth proclaimed. Their ultimate persuasion to the gospel comes from hearing truth that is put on display through a transformed life before their very eyes.<sup>58</sup> This authentic display of the Gospel, proclaimed through real life, is central to understanding YMCA ministry that is truly effective.

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<sup>55</sup> Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, 30.

<sup>56</sup> Joe Aldrich, *Life Style Evangelism: Crossing Traditional Boundaries to Reach the Unbelieving World* (Portland: Multnomah, 1981).

<sup>57</sup> Aldrich, *Life Style Evangelism*, 20.

<sup>58</sup> Aldrich, *Life Style Evangelism*, 81.

Another key insight from this book lies in the fact that evangelism meets people at their point of need.<sup>59</sup> This would presuppose certain knowledge of this person's life that gains a loving understanding of how the good news of the gospel would intersect a broken area of disparity. This is a far cry from the slick, "look for a point of similarity" approach from the "visiting a stranger" method and would demand sacrificial time to truly get to know an unbeliever. Aldrich points out that this is how Jesus engaged in evangelism.<sup>60</sup> His approach to the woman at the well was different than His approach to Nicodemus or Zacchaeus. His approach to Nathaniel was different than His approach to the rich young ruler. Whether He used knowledge of their lifestyle or images that they would understand or even the primary idol of their life, Jesus was always tailoring the message to an individual instead of following a standard memorized script with "go-to" questions. Ministry in the YMCA demands a willingness to engage many different kinds of people through many different contexts. Whether it is on the basketball court, coaching sports' teams, taking classes or serving on committees, there will be countless opportunities to apply timeless truth to ever-changing contexts.

Another contrast of evangelistic styles can be seen in the approaches that Billy Graham has taken versus the approach that Leighton Ford is suggesting. Both of these revolve around the concept of sharing the story of God and asking people to respond to God's story by entering into this story. No one can possibly argue with the fact that God has used Billy Graham and his evangelistic ministry in ways that are beyond comprehension. God took a humble, surrendered man and has used him as His mighty mouthpiece to call millions of people into the story of God.<sup>61</sup> His primary method has been to faithfully proclaim God's Word and the Gospel message to large crowds, asking

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<sup>59</sup> Aldrich, *Life Style Evangelism*, 88.

<sup>60</sup> Aldrich, *Life Style Evangelism*, 88.

<sup>61</sup> Billy Graham, *Just As I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998).

them to make a commitment to Jesus Christ and to publicly proclaim this commitment by coming forward at an appointed time. They then receive follow up and, hopefully, are plugged into local churches where their discipleship will continue. Graham, in his particular calling, was rarely able to focus the message of the Gospel towards a specific individual's needs, but instead would broadly share the salvation message in hopes that all who were listening would be struck by the simplicity and power of the Word coupled with the Spirit drawing their hearts to Him.

Leighton Ford would never disagree with God's movement through the method that Billy Graham has employed. However, he would also offer that the oldest and most natural way to reach people for Jesus Christ has less to do with a public proclamation of truth and more to do with a form of narrative evangelism that is individually tailored to the person to whom you speak.<sup>62</sup> Ford, in the book, *The Power of Story; Rediscovering the Oldest Most Natural Way to Reach People for Christ*, spent much time focusing on the Trinitarian benediction, "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." Each of these three dimensions provide a framework for how to share the Gospel story with individual people within their individual contexts. Ford says that, "Conversion, in the truest sense, is a collision of narratives. God's Story touches my story and your story, and a collision takes place."<sup>63</sup> To the generation that is in search of fatherhood, the message that "you matter to God because He loves you as His child", is a powerful message that can truly intersect the deepest felt need of their lives.<sup>64</sup> Likewise, when we teach and model authentic grace, skeptics are disarmed and a generation in need of something real, will encounter Jesus.<sup>65</sup> Finally, when isolated seekers observe authentic community that is centered

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<sup>62</sup> Leighton Ford with James Denney, *The Power of Story; Rediscovering the Oldest, Most Natural Way to Reach People for Christ* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1994), 9-15.

<sup>63</sup> Ford with Denney, *The Power of Story*, 14.

<sup>64</sup> Ford with Denney, *The Power of Story*, 63-89.

<sup>65</sup> Ford with Denney, *The Power of Story*, 99-141.

upon the fellowship that the Holy Spirit creates, their hearts will long for God's story to encapsulate their own stories.<sup>66</sup> This dynamic blend of displaying and sharing the story of God is an approach that fits really well within the ministry context of the YMCA. Many come to the YMCA with a desire to bring change to their story. Whether their surface thirst is better health, a stronger body or new community, their deepest thirst is for Jesus.

Another evangelistic approach is taken by Tim Keller in *The Reason for God; Belief in an Age of Skepticism*.<sup>67</sup> Keller writes to the particular audience of skeptics, strugglers, and critics. People in this category of life would slam their door on an evangelistic home visit, never enter the stadium of an evangelistic crusade and probably be very leery of the advances of a relationally driven Christian. They will however listen to respectful reason and carefully thought out answers to some of their hard questions. Keller begins with a great insight about doubt. He says that both Christians and non-Christians should look at doubt in a new way. For believers, he says that,

A faith without some doubts is like a human body without any antibodies in it. People who blithely go through life too busy or indifferent to ask hard questions about why they believe as they do will find themselves defenseless against either the experience of tragedy or the probing questions of a smart skeptic.”<sup>68</sup>

He also probes for skeptics to consider their doubts as an alternate belief system that is dependant on faith as well.<sup>69</sup> He then goes on to dialogue with the major difficulties that serve as obstacles for skeptics, before piecing together the rationale for the Christian faith. In a world that is becoming more post-Christian and embracing doubt and skepticism, this approach will be very valuable.

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<sup>66</sup> Ford with Denney, *The Power of Story*, 145-155.

<sup>67</sup> Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God; Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Dutton, 2008).

<sup>68</sup> Keller, *The Reason for God*, 16-17.

<sup>69</sup> Keller, *The Reason for God*, 17.

## Discipleship

Just as evangelism becomes a natural overflow of genuine revival, discipleship becomes the healthy objective of true evangelism. The ministry passion of Jesus was not simply for people to convert to Christianity, but for people to be built into disciples of Himself. This was the triumphant goal that Jesus commanded His disciples to pursue in the Great Commission. In light of this objective, Robert Coleman proclaims, "Discipling men and women is the priority around which our lives should be oriented."<sup>70</sup>

This author believes that the most helpful resource for understanding the process of discipleship is the book, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, by Robert Coleman. Coleman reveals that Jesus sent his disciples on a mission to take His Gospel the very ends of the earth, but He also modeled the best way to do that. He says, "The Master disclosed God's strategy of world conquest. He had confidence in the future precisely because he lived according to that plan in the present."<sup>71</sup> Much of this book is helpful to the process of how relational evangelism naturally flows into discipleship. It is fascinating that His immediate evangelistic strategy for world conquest was not to begin an evangelistic campaign like Billy Graham, Charles Finney or Billy Sunday. He didn't set Himself up in the public eye or even seek to draw attention to Himself at all. As Coleman points out, "Men were to be his method of winning the world to God."<sup>72</sup> He would simply gather a few willing, teachable and faithful men. He would then pour His life into them with the intent that they would follow His pattern. Coleman comments, "We must decide where we want our ministry to count—in the momentary applause of popular recognition or in the reproduction of our lives in a few chosen people who will carry on our work after we have gone. Really it is a question of which generation we are living for."<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism and Discipleship: Two books in one volume* (Peabody: Prince Press, 1998), 9.

<sup>71</sup> Coleman, *The Master Plan*, 24.

<sup>72</sup> Coleman, *The Master Plan*, 24.

<sup>73</sup> Coleman, *The Master Plan*, 38-39.

Beyond the fact that He chose men, Coleman points out that He also simply associated with them consistently. He was a living message through normal life. They spent time together as they ate, slept, walked, and talked throughout His ministry years. This lifestyle approach to evangelism and discipleship is key to understanding YMCA ministry. If one wants to reach people at the YMCA for Christ and build them into believers, it has less to do with planning large, high scale events and more to do with intentionally investing into lives throughout the normal paths of life.

Another key insight that Coleman offers is the importance of the followers of Jesus reproducing themselves. Coleman says about Jesus,

His whole evangelistic strategy—indeed, the fulfillment of his very purpose in coming into the world, dying on the cross, and rising from the grave—depended on the faithfulness of his chosen disciples to this task. It did not matter how small the group was to start with so long as they reproduced and taught their disciples to reproduce. This was the way his church was to win.<sup>74</sup>

The renewal of the YMCA will be dependant on understanding and replicating this method of making disciples who, in turn, reproduce disciples. This author believes that the YMCA will not be awakened by putting on large events where the gospel is proclaimed to the masses, but by a grassroots movement of disciples pouring their lives into reproducing disciples.

This author also believes that a key to the process of making disciples is to raise up churches that embrace discipleship as part of their core purpose. A great primer to the process of building a healthy church that is dedicated to disciple-making is the study course developed by the Billy Graham center. The focus of this book is the training of individual believers to fulfill the Great Commission by evangelizing, establishing and

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<sup>74</sup> Coleman, *The Master Plan*, 99.

equipping people for ministry.<sup>75</sup> A local church that takes on this vision will be comprised of leaders that have been trained and equipped to personally carry out this vision of discipleship. Therefore, a congregation can be filled with many reproducers who function in the environments of large group, small group and one on one relationships, yet are all, individually, committed to discipleship.<sup>76</sup>

Bill Hull has a similar passion about the Great Commission being accomplished through disciple making by local churches, however, he proposes a slightly different philosophical approach in *The Disciple-Making Church*.<sup>77</sup> He sees churches going through a process of moving from an expanding church (like the early church) to a mission church (like Antioch) to a discipling church (like the church of Ephesus). The discipling church will have a “come and be with me” philosophy of ministry.<sup>78</sup> After arguing that the book of Ephesians is a wonderful model of discipleship and walking us through each chapter he makes some strong conclusions that it is the role of the church more than the role of individuals to make disciples. The thought is that Jesus was the only one capable of truly making disciples and we can simply create leadership communities where disciples are made. In the appendix, Randall Knutson says,

When Christ disciplined, He was God-man. Full deity rested in Him, along with all the gifts of the Spirit. In John 14, he told us His leaving would be to our advantage since it would let the Spirit impart gifts to accomplish His Great Commission. Now, not as individuals, but as a church, we disciple.<sup>79</sup>

This author would agree that churches are part of the disciple making process, but this mentality seems to cut the individual responsibility out of Christ’s command. However, when individuals embrace their own role in the Master’s plan for making disciples and

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<sup>75</sup> Robert E. Coleman, with Timothy Beougher and Tom Phillips, eds., *Disciplemaking: A Self-Study Course of Follow-up and Discipleship* (Wheaton: Billy Graham Center, 1994), ix.

<sup>76</sup> Coleman with Beougher, *Disciplemaking*, 150.

<sup>77</sup> Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1990).

<sup>78</sup> Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church*, 108.

<sup>79</sup> Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church*, 222.



they, in turn, are fully connected with a disciple-making church, God uses that dynamic in amazing ways to fulfill His heart for the world!

### **Healthy Churches and Church Planting Movements**

A final focus of this literature review will engage books that have been written on how to develop healthy churches and, ultimately, church planting movements. This author believes that central to the vision of lighting 14,000 lighthouses with the fire that once shone brightly for Christ is the necessity of creating a movement of missional, disciple-making churches within each of these YMCAs.

Most healthy churches would affirm the necessity of building missional, disciple-making churches, but the methodology of accomplishing this goal often looks quite different. For example, Rick Warren has advocated that a service designed for seekers will draw lost people to Christ.<sup>80</sup> He challenges churches to spend significant resources and planning time to design a service that is attractive, comfortable, well-lit, perfectly timed, devoid of deep theological terms and targeted, very carefully, to the needs and desires of unbelievers.<sup>81</sup> It seems to start with the assumption that people are turned off by the traditional aspects associated with churches and will feel pleasantly surprised and attracted to a professional, polished, impressive church that is tailored to their needs. Though God has used Rick Warren's approach to win many for Christ, this author believes that a missional church planted in a YMCA will succeed if it focuses less on the environment of the church service itself and more on reaching the environment of the YMCA community on Monday through Saturday. A YMCA church will never be incredibly attractive in its physical environment as it usually will be located in a basketball gym. However, when the church is present throughout the week in the leagues, classes,

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<sup>80</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Church; Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

<sup>81</sup> Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Church*, 251-277.

committees and on the courts, a dynamic of a missional church can be present in awesome ways.

When building services and programs designed for seekers, one of the more helpful resources that one can interact with is the *Reveal* study by Willow Creek.<sup>82</sup> There is refreshing humility that this study was founded upon as the Willow Creek Association realized that they were wrong with many of their hypotheses of spiritual growth. They wrongly assumed that church activities and compelling programs would be the key to spiritual growth, but found, instead, that at different stages of maturity, people need to be taught to spiritually feed themselves and to be provided with opportunities to serve and disciple others. It is mature Christians who can and will engage in evangelism and discipleship as they are properly nurtured and equipped to grow.<sup>83</sup>

Dan Kimball would say that if a seeker sensitive model of doing ministry connected with the culture at one time, then that time is over and a new era has begun. He advocates that the culture is in a post-seeker sensitive moment and is longing for an ancient, vintage type of faith once again. He says, "A post-seeker sensitive worship gathering promotes, rather than hides, full displays of spirituality (extended worship, religious symbols, liturgy, extensive prayer times, extensive use of Scripture and readings, etc.) so that people can experience and be transformed by the message of Jesus."<sup>84</sup> Unlike Rick Warren's approach, Sally Morgenthauer comments on this shift in culture by saying, "The question for the church after this shift: Can the church escape the happy-song-silk-plant ghetto and minister to a cheese-intolerant, spiritually self-sufficient culture?"<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, *Reveal: Where are you?* (Barrington: Willow Creek Association, 2007), 56.

<sup>83</sup> Hawkins and Parkinson, *Reveal*, 66.

<sup>84</sup> Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 26.

<sup>85</sup> Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 34.

There are some significant insights within this book and this writer senses that Kimball truly desires to honor God and to lead a church that can function in a redemptive manner within an emergent culture. He does a good job of defining the attitude of the emerging culture towards the faith. He makes some key observations that any church planter must learn, such as the fact that this culture's viewpoint of spirituality is pluralistic. They are not drawn to the rational, but instead the mystical and experiential. Their view of sexuality is more open and tolerant and most importantly, Christianity is seen as the negative, finger pointing religion.<sup>86</sup> The culture tends to have a consumer mindset and therefore, "Church is seen as a dispenser of religious goods and services. People come to church to be fed, to have their needs met through quality programs, and to have the professionals teach their children about God."<sup>87</sup> Though this writer agrees with so much of Kimball's cultural analysis and affirms his heart to reach this generation, it is in some of the practical application of church life that this writer would voice some concerns. Kimball is clear that an emerging service is less linear and structured and more built on individuals and their personal experiences. There is a multi-sensory menu of different prayer stations, offering sections, art displays, labyrinths, and many other ideas. He shares his true heart which is that God would be the center of every single station and experience, and yet, one can't help but think that this approach may lead towards a man-centered worship experience as each person tries to create the coolest avenue that "works for them". It almost seems like Church becomes a great buffet of spiritual food offered for you to pick and choose what you hunger for rather than the mutual submission of a community learning through the power of the communicated

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<sup>86</sup> Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 63.

<sup>87</sup> Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 95.

Word of God.<sup>88</sup> This author wonders if his methods may not ultimately hurt that which he is longing to renew.

Thom Rainer focuses less on the actual evangelistic strategy of the church itself and more upon the receptivity of the unchurched individuals within the lives of Christians. He developed a system of categorizing the unchurched that stretches from a "U5", or highly antagonistic to the gospel, to a "U1", or an individual that is highly receptive to the gospel.<sup>89</sup> As one understands these faith stages, one is able to customize an evangelistic approach to help move them closer in their journey towards Christ. The main discovery of this book that Rainer emphasizes over and over again is that a great majority of the unchurched (8 out of 10) will actually come to church if they are invited. He also discovered many surprising insights, such as the fact that many of the unchurched are far more concerned about the spiritual well-being of their children than of themselves.<sup>90</sup> It is important for a YMCA church plant to realize that their children's ministry is far from a ministry that functions on the sidelines of their church, but is central to the very essence of who they are!

Rainer also contributes much to the idea of creating a disciple-making church through his book, *Simple Church*. He talks about the process of moving people towards spiritual transformation. He says, "To have a simple church, you must design a simple discipleship process. This process must be clear. It must move people toward maturity. It must be integrated fully into your church, and it must get rid of the clutter around it."<sup>91</sup> Rainer gives great guidelines for how to keep one's church simple and offers significant research that would show that churches that create a simple and clear structure tend to be effective over the long haul.

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<sup>88</sup> Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 119-168.

<sup>89</sup> Thom S. Rainer, *The Unchurched Next Door* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 21.

<sup>90</sup> Rainer, *The Unchurched*, 31.

<sup>91</sup> Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 26.

Ed Stetzer also offers practical steps in how to plant a missional church in his book, *Planting Missional Churches*.<sup>92</sup> He talks of vision, mission, and launch teams but also touches on what it means to be missional. He discusses the concept of being incarnational and moving away from attractional and extractional models towards a way of ministry that seeks to identify needs of particular communities. Missional ministry involves lovingly incarnating into those subcultures with the Gospel. Though Stetzer has been an incredible leader in this field and offers so much helpful information through his various resources, this author was disappointed that this book spent only 8 ½ pages on the concept and practice of being missional and a great majority of the book on issues such as how to do good mail outs, telemarketing, logo-creation, and the securing of quality meeting space. It seems as if he spends a bulk of his thoughts telling practical tips on how to attract people to church instead of doing ministry in a missional way. However, a YMCA church planter can still gain much from the clear heart attitudes behind this book and the other wealth of resources that Stetzer offers.

This writer believes that the most helpful resource available for missional church planting is simply the manual that Tim Keller and Allen Thompson designed to train missional church planters at Redeemer Church in New York City. Keller passionately contends that in order to plant missional churches, one must know and communicate the Gospel, one must know and study the ever-changing context and one must have a deep love for the holistic transformation of the city.<sup>93</sup> He also makes a helpful distinction for the creation of a church planting network. Keller says that, "a church planting movement is a spirit-directed activity which naturally builds, renews and expands the body of Christ in a given city/region through the recovery and application of the Gospel. The movement produces hundreds of new believers, scores of leaders and dozens of new churches that

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<sup>92</sup> Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 161.

<sup>93</sup> Tim Keller and J. Allen Thompson, *Church Planter Manual* (New York: Redeemer Church Planting Center, 2002), 21.

bring spiritual, social and cultural change to the city and surrounding region.”<sup>94</sup> A

Church-planting network is slightly different as it is “an intentional communication and relational structure that brings together leaders with a common vision to resource one another to fulfill the mission.”<sup>95</sup>

A final group of church planters that has been extremely helpful to form my thinking of creating a church-planting network is the Acts 29 network. Mark Driscoll founded this network and gives great insight into how to be appropriately missional.<sup>96</sup> Similar to Keller, he talks of entering the culture, contextualizing the gospel and having a deep love for the city. All of this is to be done in a spirit of repentance and humility with a continual aim to raise up missionaries and multiply churches to reach the complexities of the diverse world in which we live.<sup>97</sup> If this writer is to truly be a part of launching a church-planting network that contextualizes the Gospel in each of the 14,000 YMCAs around the globe, it will be essential to train church planters that can think missionally.

This chapter has sought to survey and evaluate the materials that are essential in renewing a YMCA. The three major categories of materials that have been examined are the resources focused upon the history and mission of the YMCA, materials dealing with the interrelated ministry functions of revival, evangelism and discipleship, and finally, resources that give insight towards building healthy churches within the missional context of the YMCA.

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<sup>94</sup> Keller and Thompson, *Church Planter Manual*, 242.

<sup>95</sup> Keller and Thompson, *Church Planter Manual*, 242.

<sup>96</sup> Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears, *Vintage Church: Timeless Truths and Timely Methods* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008).

<sup>97</sup> Driscoll and Breshears, *Vintage Church*, 217-239.

## CHAPTER 4

### ASSESSING THE BRIGHTNESS

John Mott, the former president of the YMCA of the USA, once warned that a YMCA lighthouse could fall short in its purpose of shining the light of Jesus Christ in this world. As previously quoted, he once stated,

If the Young Men's Christian Association is to increase its spiritual vitality and fruitfulness, it must maintain at all costs its distinctively Christian, pronouncedly evangelistic, and aggressively missionary character. This is tantamount to saying that it must preserve its clear Christian aim, its unshakable Christian foundation, and its genuinely Christian control; that it must hold in proper prominence its Christian program and be animated by a genuinely Christian spirit. The Association must steadfastly resist the danger of becoming a mere human institution – in a general sense religious but not emphatically, pervasively, and contagiously Christian. This essential must never be compromised, obscured, or abandoned for the sake of any plausible outward success or worldly advantage, for such a course would mark the beginning of the end. Wherever an Association lacks world-conquering power, it is because it has to some extent been conquered by the world.<sup>1</sup>

In essence, Mott is saying that the purpose of a YMCA is to be a lighthouse that boldly and clearly shines forth the light of Christ, but it is possible for a YMCA to become a mere human institution that fails to succeed in its true calling. A quote of these consequences beckons the question, "Has the YMCA become a mere human institution?" Is the YMCA an interconnected movement of 14,000 lighthouses driven by the calling to shine the light of Christ brightly within the darkness, or has the YMCA drifted from its true mission?

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<sup>1</sup> John R. Mott, *Confronting Young Men With the Living Christ* (New York: Association Press, 1923), 69.

It is the painful assumption of this author that the YMCA has experienced a global dimming and is in desperate need of being awakened to its true calling. Though it is the writer's desire to be part of the global re-lighting of all 14,000 lighthouses, this project will be focused on assessing the mission drift of one specific lighthouse, The Countryside YMCA in Lebanon, Ohio. Further research will then be examined to evaluate whether the results are indicative of the national movement as a whole. Finally, a three pronged plan will be introduced that will aid in helping Countryside YMCA to return to its true mission of being a lighthouse in this community for Jesus Christ.

### **The Specific Setting**

Countryside YMCA is located in Lebanon, Ohio and was established in 1978.<sup>2</sup> In many ways it is similar to most other YMCAs in this nation. It has swimming pools, soccer leagues, a childcare program, summer camps, basketball gyms and locker rooms. Like most cities, the YMCA is the central hub of the programs, leagues and lessons for Lebanon, Ohio. As is the case with many communities, the YMCA is where natural relationships occur as people exercise, play racket ball and watch their kids take swimming lessons.

Though Countryside is very similar in many respects to most other YMCAs, it is also unique in its size and influence. Countryside is the largest local branch of the YMCA in the world. The facility itself, is over 260,000 square feet on 170 acres. It has 5 swimming pools, an indoor soccer arena, its own center designed for seniors and over 400 programs that are offered at any given time to the community. Its members and program members consist of nearly 35,000 people. Though there are associations of YMCAs in other cities that have a larger joint membership and greater influence

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<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey Williams, *Ingenuity in a Can; The Ralph Stolle Story* (Wilmington: Orange Frazer Press, 2004), 80.



throughout the movement as a whole, Countryside has a reputation for being a YMCA that many other local YMCAs seek to learn from. Much of the excitement of this project is rooted in the fact that if Countryside YMCA were to truly embrace its mission and role in this community, it would not only have a profound effect on the city of Lebanon, but a ripple effect would be created as many YMCAs throughout the nation and world would follow.

Another reason that makes the setting of Countryside, YMCA particularly attractive for this Thesis project, is this author's unique relationship with this YMCA. I am on the board of directors at Countryside, which means that I am one of the key individuals charged with leading the direction of this YMCA. In addition to this, I serve on the executive council, which is the core group of leaders that make the strategic decisions for the YMCA. I am also the leader of the Christian Emphasis committee, a group of people that seeks to make Christ and His values evident throughout Countryside. Finally, I have the joy of being the Senior Pastor of Antioch, the church of the YMCA. Our church not only meets in Countryside YMCA for weekend services, but also, as I will discuss later, seeks to truly view Countryside as the strategic platform that God has given us to display the Gospel. This partnership has given me a special opportunity to assess the mission drift of this YMCA and a strong motivation to help it relive its mission.

### **Assessing the Brightness at Countryside YMCA**

One of the ways to assess if Countryside has drifted from its mission is to evaluate the knowledge and application of the mission amongst the people who have been hired to be the champions of the mission, the employees of Countryside, YMCA. This particular YMCA has nearly 600 employees. There is a vast array of different roles at Countryside from the CEO, to lifeguards, to exercise instructors, to camp counselors,

to executive directors overseeing major areas in the YMCA. Though there is much differentiation in the employees' jobs at Countryside, there has been a recent, common factor that is required in every job. Every single employee is required to be trained in the mission, values and vision of the YMCA. By God's grace, the Lord has opened the door for this author to be the one to lead these trainings. Every employee at Countryside has been required to attend two training sessions that I teach. Along with the opportunity to share the Gospel with each employee, these training times have given me an avenue to assess their current understanding of the mission. I teach groups of about 100 employees at a time. I have created a very simple yet highly revealing survey that assesses their level of mission understanding during their first training session.

I attempted to form the survey in a way that would be concise, straight to the point, yet, as fun as possible. Therefore, I have entitled it, "Are you smarter than a YMCA 5<sup>th</sup> grader?" As I give this four-question survey, the game show music plays in the background and they are each given a blank piece of paper and asked to respond to the following questions by giving themselves a score of 1 to 10. A score of 1 would indicate, "I have absolutely no idea." A score of 10 means, "I am very confident of the answer."

The following questions formed the basis of my survey:

1. Could you write out the mission of the YMCA?
2. Could you name the 5 core values that guide your job here at the YMCA?
3. Could you name the 11 Christian principles?
4. Could you give a brief history of how the YMCA began and how it has grown in its worldwide influence?

As this author examines the results of these surveys and the application of how the employees' mission knowledge impacts the 400 programs and 35,000 members of Countryside YMCA, it should be revealing as to whether or not Countryside has drifted from its true purpose.

## Results

The following results are taken from 163 staff members. This survey was given over two separate training sessions and covers, approximately, a third of the staff. Not only is a third of the total staff represented here, but also, nearly every full-time employee is represented. Therefore, this is a significant sampling that could be considered a solid representation of the whole Countryside YMCA staff.<sup>3</sup>

The first question asked was simply, "Could you write out the mission of the YMCA?" This question is extremely important, as an organization's mission is the heart and core of who they are and why they exist. The mission of Countryside YMCA states, "To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all." I instructed them to give themselves a score of 1 to 10 based on the number of words they could recall. For example, if they know that the mission has something to do with Christian principles, they could give themselves a 3 or 4. If they are aware of the words, "spirit, mind, and body," they should give themselves a 5 or 6. If they know the mission, the score would be a "10." Unfortunately, the results of this question were painfully revealing. Out of the 163 participants, 69 of them scored themselves with a 1. This means that 42.3% of the employees couldn't even recite one word of the mission statement. Only 8 people, (less than half of 1 percent of the employees) scored themselves a 10, revealing that they know the mission statement. The most common score, by far, was a 1. If the total score of the knowledge of the mission were to be reported through a percentage, meaning the total points given versus the total points available, the Countryside staff would score a 33.8%. This is particularly alarming because of the fact that the mission statement is written on the walls and is printed in

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<sup>3</sup> These training sessions were held on, approximately, October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2009 and January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

nearly every piece of literature that is given out. It is the first thing that one hears on the YMCA answering machine and it is prominent on every page of the website.

These statistics reveal some very dismal realities for the Countryside YMCA. How can an organization live according to its mission when the vast majority of the employees have absolutely no idea of the content of their mission? Each employee is left to create his or her own overarching purpose. This would be similar to 163 archers shooting arrows in the air, while only 8 archers have a clear view of the target. Some arrows may randomly hit the bull's eye, but the vast majority of arrows would scatter everywhere. If the heart of the YMCA is truly meant to be a Christian mission, then one can see how far the organization has drifted if nearly 40% of the employees can't even name a single word of the mission, much less the word, "Christian."

The second survey question that the employees responded to was simply, "Could you name the five core values?" Jim Collins calls an organization's core values, "the enduring tenants" or the guiding principles that shape how one goes after the mission.<sup>4</sup> If the mission were "what" the YMCA is trying to accomplish, the core values would answer the question of "how" the YMCA should seek to attain that mission. Countryside YMCA has 5 core values. They are, "Caring," "Respect," "Honesty," "Responsibility" and "Faith." The YMCA of the USA only acknowledges the first four of these as national core values, but "Faith," as will be explained later, is a recent addition to the core values at Countryside. Because of such a recent focus upon our core values, I have expected that this would be, by far, the most positive of all the responses in the survey. Though this question did reveal the highest level of understanding of the four questions, the results are still strikingly disappointing. I asked them on a scale of 1 to 10 to rate whether or not they could name the 5 values. I then told them to give themselves

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<sup>4</sup> For an excellent discussion on mission, vision, and core values, see <http://www.jimcollins.com/tools/diagnostic-tool.pdf>. (accessed August 1, 2008).

2 points per value. Only 35 of the 163 employees reported that they could name all 5 values. 19 of the employees could get 4 out of the 5, but 29 employees could only name 1 of the 4 values. 21 employees couldn't even name 1 of the core values. This is stunning due to the fact that the values are printed upon many walls, incorporated into murals throughout the facility, printed on flags in the parking lot and generally incorporated into every piece of literature that the YMCA puts out. If I were to score the overall knowledge of the core values by the staff of the YMCA, they would receive a score of 53%. The staff could name slightly over half of the core principles that guide the organization.

The third question that was asked to the staff focuses on a specific portion of the mission statement. Again, the heart of the mission statement is that the YMCA would be an organization that puts Christian principles into practice. A natural follow up question would seemingly be, "What are the Christian principles that we are trying to put into practice?" The YMCA acknowledges 11 Christian principles: "Faith," "Honesty," "Responsibility," "Respect," "Caring," "Grace," "Hope," "Forgiveness," "Faithfulness," "Humility" and "Love."<sup>5</sup> I told the employees that they get one free one and then to give themselves a point for every other Christian principle that that they could name. The results that emerged from this question are perhaps the most painful of all in assessing the mission drift of this organization. 108 out of 163 could not name a single Christian principle. This means that 66% of the employees have not the slightest inclination of the practical application of the mission that guides their job. Three individuals reported a score of 8 and the overall score of the knowledge of Christian Principles was 18.2%.

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<sup>5</sup> These Christian principles are discussed on the website, [ymcamission.org](http://ymcamission.org), a site that was active until 2010, but is currently not operating. These principles have been accepted core to the training modules that this author has presented throughout various YMCA training times. The author first accessed this website September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

In addition to this, there was not a single employee at Countryside that could name the 11 Christian principles. The highest leaders in the entire organization, the ones responsible for holding the other employees accountable to the mission, were all in the crowd and yet, not one of them could name the principles that they are responsible for leading. If these results were compared to a game of basketball, with the goal being to shoot the round, orange ball into the iron hoop, unfortunately, not a single employee at Countryside YMCA could identify the basketball.

The final question that was asked to the employees is perhaps the most subjective of all of the questions. I wanted to assess the general knowledge of the history of the YMCA. Knowing that the history of the Y is amazingly rich with Christian mission, I wanted to see if anybody was familiar with the story of the organization that they work for. My intuition was that nobody would have any idea of any of its history because that is what I generally encounter with anyone that is associated with the YMCA. I phrased the question, "Could you write a brief history of the how the YMCA was started and how it grew in its world wide influence?" It is difficult to be objective with this question, because the history of this organization is so broad and comprehensive. However, it does measure an individual's personal confidence in their knowledge of the history of the YMCA. My assumption is that these scores are higher than the reality of their historical knowledge. For example, one individual scored himself a perfect 10 and wrote "basketball/man" on the piece of paper as if the comprehensive history of the YMCA could be reported with these two words. With that said, 94 out of 163 people gave themselves a score of 1 or less. This reveals that 57.6% of the employees would report that they know absolutely nothing of the history of their organization. The comprehensive score for their knowledge of the history of the YMCA was 21%, a dismal failure.

The results of this survey are not shocking to me but they are very revealing in the process of discerning why the YMCA has drifted so much from its original purpose. If

the majority of people within an organization have no idea of their mission, values and history, very little will ever be accomplished. For example, if I were to interview a group of missionaries that were stationed in a missions outpost near an unreached people group and they were to reveal that they have no idea why they are there, what they are supposed to do, how they are supposed to do it and where they came from, I would expect very few people to ever be reached for Christ.

In addition to the results of the Countryside survey, a national survey conducted by Triangle 2 partners, a consultant to YMCAs, also reveals some helpful insights.<sup>6</sup> The study was entitled, "Spirituality and the YMCA" and it consisted of 300 phone interviews focused on the category of members and non-members of the YMCA. The results of this research are a helpful addition as the Countryside survey dealt with employees of the YMCA while this survey focused both upon members of the YMCA and members of the community at large. Exactly 50% of those interviewed were either members of the YMCA or had family members that were members. They were asked the question, "What do you think of as the primary work of the YMCA?" 59% stated the physical development of members. Only 14% responded that Spiritual development was the primary work. This simply reveals, predictably, that the majority of society views the YMCA as a workout facility. When asked, "Have you seen, or are you aware of the Christian aspect of the YMCA?", 54% responded that they were unaware, 23% stated that they were somewhat aware and only 19% responded that they were very aware of the Christian aspect. Perhaps the most revealing data came in response to the question, "How likely would you be to look to the YMCA for help in your spiritual development?" 45% responded that they would be very unlikely and another 13% said that they would be unlikely. 31% simply said that they would be neutral in looking to the YMCA as a

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<sup>6</sup> This survey was conducted by Triangle 2 Partners and Perdue research group in June, 2004. It is referred to in Eric Ellsworth's work, "The YMCA's challenge of Being a Christian Organization in a Multicultural Society" (Masters Thesis, Springfield College, 2005).

source of Spiritual development. Simply stated, out of 300 phone interviews, 290 people responded that they would either be neutral or unlikely to ever think of the YMCA as a source of spiritual development. Once again, the global purpose statement proclaims, "The Young Men's Christian Associations seek to unite those young men who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Savior, according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to be his disciples in their faith and in their life, and to associate their efforts for the extension of his Kingdom amongst young men." One only needs to hold this data up against the background of this statement to instantly realize how far this organization has drifted from its mission.

After focusing upon employees of the YMCA and members and non-members of the YMCA community, a final helpful category of people to survey is the highest leaders of the YMCA movement. In 2005, there was a very insightful survey conducted that measured the views of key leaders from the National board of the YMCA and the CEOs and COOs of the largest YMCAs in the United States. Eric Ellsworth, the CEO of the Indianapolis association, conducted this research.<sup>7</sup>

Sixty-five CEOs and COOs of the largest and most influential YMCAs responded to the survey. Their answers are revealing as they are the primary leaders that many YMCAs around the world seek to follow. When asked if the YMCA should still provide spiritual programming, 81% of them responded, "yes." However, of those that responded affirmative, 69% felt that the YMCA should offer spiritual programming to all faiths and not be exclusively Christian in nature. Similarly, when asked if there should be a special emphasis on Jesus and His principles, the YMCA leaders seemed to be split in their response. 45% favored an emphasis on Jesus, while 40% were not in favor and 15% were unsure. Again, it was John Mott that gave a passionate plea that the YMCA must

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<sup>7</sup> Eric Ellsworth, "The YMCA's challenge of being a Christian Organization in a Multicultural Society" (Masters Thesis, Springfield College, 2005).



“preserve its clear Christian aim.” He said that this would be the source of the organization’s vitality and fruitfulness. Yet, in sharp contrast to this goal, nearly 7 out of 10 CEOs and COOs love the concept of being “spiritual” but don’t think that the YMCA should have a clear Christian aim. A post-modern, relativistic from of spiritual tolerance has seeped into the culture of the YMCA. Spirituality is very attractive, but exclusive truth makes the leadership uncomfortable. The value of not being offensive to anyone is something that is clearly present in the YMCA culture. This is a striking obstacle that will have to be carefully overcome. Amazingly enough, each of these men and women still continue to sign an annual pledge every single year that declares their loyalty to Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the most important group to be surveyed was the National board. Though this is a small survey sample of only 16 people, the National board has great influence over the national interpretation of the mission of the YMCA. When asked if the YMCA should place a special emphasis on Jesus and his principles, 47% said, “no,” 20% said “yes” and 33% were unsure. When asked if the mission statement should be changed, there was a 50/50 split amongst the group. When probed a little deeper, 56% felt that the YMCA should focus more on its social mission rather than such a spiritual mission. Finally, when asked whether or not the YMCA should lift up the “C”, there was another 50/50 split. The national board seems to have an “elephant in the room” issue when it comes to their true purpose and mission. The group is divided over whether or not there should even be a Christian emphasis. For some, lifting up Jesus Christ and His mission seems to be something that they want to cling to. However, the other 80% of the group is either unsure of how to deal with this or would like to switch the Christian emphasis altogether. For those of the leadership that do not want this, they would be directly resisting their stated purpose, mission, constitution, nearly every piece of

historical literature ever written on the YMCA and an entire foundation that is forged in Christian mission.

All of this survey data seems to emphasize a consistent deficiency in the three categories of the employees, the members and the overall leadership of the YMCA in regards to their understanding of their true mission and subsequently, their inability to implement this mission. If the YMCA is truly a movement of 14,000 shining lighthouses, then the brightness of the light has dimmed indeed. To use a football analogy, the players on the field have no idea what they need to do to win or even what game they are playing. The fans are unsure of what they are supposed to be cheering for and the coaches seem to be focused on designing aerobics classes instead of realizing that they are truly coaching in the super bowl of ministry.

### **The Strategy to Relight the Lighthouse**

In light of this data, it has become increasingly clear that the Countryside YMCA, along with a great majority of YMCAs within this country, are in need of being awakened to their true purposes within their communities. This writer will introduce a 3-pronged plan that will, I believe, help to bring Countryside YMCA back to the original vision of being a lighthouse for Christ within Lebanon, Ohio. This plan is comprised of three separate initiatives. The first component is the development of two training seminars that can be presented to the employees of the YMCA. The second initiative is the development of a chaplaincy program. Finally, the third component is the establishing of a missional church that desires to display the Gospel in and through the community of the YMCA. A template of the major steps towards planting a missional church within a YMCA will be proposed. This writer believes that each of these components could function independently and truly be the cause of significant transformation within a

YMCA. However, I also believe that the dynamic of all three of these initiatives, working in harmony, will be mighty tools in God's hand as He uses them to relight the lighthouse!

### **Initiative #1 - Training Seminars**

The first initiative is the creation of two training seminars. These seminars accomplish the purposes of sharing the Gospel with every employee, teaching them the history, purpose, and mission of the movement, instructing them on the true nature of their jobs and teaching them practical steps so that they can implement the core values of the YMCA within their work.

#### **"The Mission of the YMCA"**

The first session is entitled, "The Mission of the YMCA." As the title suggests, it is focused upon understanding what the mission of the YMCA is all about, how the mission has been accomplished throughout history and how employees can live the mission within their workplace. A copy of the power point presentation is found in Appendix A; however, some of the broad themes that shape the design of the project will also be highlighted here.

After some introductory remarks and a brief discussion on the nature of a "mission" itself, I begin by teaching the verse, Habakkuk 2:2. This text reads, "And the Lord answered me, 'Write the Vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it.'" I explain how God desired a vision to be clear and to cause action. I then tell them that my desire is that they would have a clear and plain understanding of the vision for their workplace and that it would spur them on to appropriate action.

I then launch into my "Are you smarter than a 5<sup>th</sup> grader" tool which will, most likely, have the result of each employee feeling as if they have very little knowledge about the mission of the movement, the history of the organization that they work for, the

core values that they are meant to display or what they are supposed to even do to be successful. It is a sobering moment. I follow this with some table discussion time for them to discuss how they performed on the test. This section closes with me explaining that if an organization is not clear about who they are and what they are supposed to accomplish that several negative results can happen. First, an organization can be misaligned. When tires are out of alignment and pulling in different directions, friction and burnout is caused. Organizations can function in the same manner. I then explain what I call the "3 killer B's". When an organization is not aligned around a mission, it tends to judge success by the status of its building, budgets and bodies. I close this section by focusing on organizations that have lived their mission successfully and have great results that have followed it. I use the examples of Wal-mart, Starbucks and McDonalds.

The next section in the presentation focuses on the story of the mission of the YMCA. I begin with the story of George Williams and I talk about his early years, his heart for people and specifically, his conversion. This is one of the most significant moments in the presentation because I weave the Gospel message into his testimony. I talk of how he was empty and searching for fulfillment, but two friends saw that he was, ultimately, in need of Christ. I then explain how a minister taught him the difference between being religious and having a real relationship with God. I explain sin, the cross and that forgiveness comes through Christ. In his actual conversion moment, I share a salvation prayer that may have been similar to what he would have said. Though I am merely telling the story of Williams, I am strategically weaving in the core tenets of the Gospel and even challenging every person to examine his or her own life. Throughout the remainder of this section, I then tell many of the spiritual highlights of the early days of the YMCA. I tell of the major leaders, the defining declarations and the statements of

purpose that have stood the test of time. I then explain the "Paris Basis"<sup>8</sup>, the present global purpose statement that is radically focused upon Christ and the building of His Kingdom. Finally, I close this section with the annual pledge, the strong commitment that every CEO signs, vowing to be an organization that upholds the Paris Basis. If an organization does not sign this commitment, they cease to be a YMCA. This is a powerful moment within the presentation because each person is called to the convicting question of whether or not they are truly living according to what they, as an organization, have pledged.

Following the historical section of the orientation, I then proceed to the current mission statement of the YMCA of the USA, "To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all." I give an overview of each of these Christian principles and give practical examples of how Christian principles can be put into real life situations in the YMCA. I close this section by sharing the anticipated result of this mission being accomplished, a balanced triangle of spirit, mind and body. Another table discussion presses into this concept of whether or not the employees see their departments as displaying a balanced, equilateral triangle.

The next major section is entitled, "those who have lived the mission." In this section, I aim to show recent historical figures such as Moody, Chambers, and many others who have displayed this mission in real life. I try to inspire the employees by showing other employees who have embraced this mission and have had positive effects on many lives. I close this section with a ten-minute table talk on how to be employees that can truly live the mission in their own departments.

In my final section, I teach them the meaning and significance of their logo. I remind them of their core mission and finally, I leave them with some inspiring

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<sup>8</sup> *Constitution and Bylaws of the National Council of Young Men's Christian Associations of the United States of America* (Chicago: YMCA of the USA).

possibilities. I return to the original businesses that I shared such as Starbucks and Walmart and show the actual numbers of their global locations. I show how the YMCA is profoundly bigger than either of these and is able to have an incredible global impact if it would truly live out its mission. After a few inspiring video clips, I close in prayer.

My main purposes in this orientation is that every employee would leave with the knowledge of the Gospel, their history, the understanding that they are, ultimately, in full-time ministry, and that the goal of their job is to be the living display of Jesus and His principles in this environment. As they are, objectively, stunned and overwhelmed, I make sure to tell them that there is a church in the building that is fully committed to training them, helping them, and connecting with them in their great mission that has been given to them.

### **“The Core values of the YMCA”**

The second training session, which is found in Appendix B, is designed to teach the five core values of Countryside YMCA. The Y of the USA currently recognizes the four values of “Caring,” “Respect,” “Honesty,” and “Responsibility.” “Faith” was recently added as a fifth core value at Countryside, representing an incredible foundational commitment to the original purposes of the YMCA.

This presentation has a simple, yet powerful dynamic to it. For each of the core values, I begin by teaching a story from the life of Jesus, explaining that if we are to put Christian principles into practice, than we need to learn from the source of the Christian principles, Christ. I then apply each scriptural principle to their working lives at the YMCA. I open my Bible and proceed to teach five, twenty-minute snapshots of the life of Jesus to the people. In each of these five teaching stories, I train them in a Biblical concept and creatively share the gospel with them. Each of these 5 sections is followed by 5, 10-minute small group times where they discuss what they heard.

Specifically, for “Caring,” I teach the story of how Jesus cured a man with leprosy and I challenge them to understand how they are never beyond the caring touch of Jesus. My exhortation to them is care like Jesus cares for people so that their lives are a living display of Him. For “Honesty,” I teach the story of the woman at the well and how Jesus was willing to be completely honest with her. I challenge their own spiritual thirst and point them to the Well of Eternal Life. I then challenge them to be completely honest with people about their deepest need for Christ. For “Responsibility,” I teach the parable of the lost sheep with the focus on the shepherd’s responsibility to go after the one who is far from him. I ask them if they are “lost” and tell them of the joy that the shepherd experiences when they are found. For this section I also encourage them towards their responsibility to join the rescue mission of Jesus in their workplace by helping lost people become found. For “Respect,” I teach the woman who was caught in adultery. I show them how Jesus loved her for who she was but unwilling to leave her unchanged. I teach that true respect has the balance of grace and truth that Christ displayed. For “Faith,” I teach the story of when Jesus asked Peter to walk on the water and I challenge them to have a “faith” that is reaching up to Jesus. After reemphasizing the Gospel five times through five mini sermons, it is often difficult to contain my joy that God has opened up an opportunity such as this.

My purposes in this training are mainly that the employees would hear the Gospel, that they would see Christ as the original source of each of their Christian principles and that they would have some tangible ways to display Christ, through these principles, within their environment at the YMCA.

## Initiative #2 – The Chaplaincy Program

The second major initiative that this writer believes will be used by God to relight the lighthouse of Countryside YMCA is a chaplaincy program. Throughout history, there

have been many individuals that have held the role of a YMCA chaplain. From D.L. Moody, to Oswald Chambers to scores of others, Godly men and women have seen the YMCA as an amazing platform to engage in personal ministry with people. God has used this avenue of ministry to bring renewal throughout many moments of history and this writer believes that the Lord will use this avenue again for a mighty renewal. Enclosed, in Appendix C, is the chaplaincy handbook that I have developed for Countryside YMCA. This handbook contains an overview of the program, requirements, responsibilities, various policies and the application to become a chaplain at Countryside. Much of this was developed after observing the model of a good friend of this writer, Joshua Heaston, who created a proto-type chaplaincy program that has been bearing much fruit in Toledo, Ohio.

The broad goal of this program is that there would be individuals who come to the YMCA to intentionally minister to the staff and members. These individuals would engage in evangelism and discipleship within the different avenues that are available at the YMCA. This is demonstrated in the overall mission statement of the program which states, "To demonstrate the love of Christ by caring for and encouraging people within the YMCA community." Volunteer chaplains will come during different strategic shifts and seek to be living examples of the core values. They will pray for people, listen to people and seek for opportunities to point hearts towards Christ.

There are several commitments and requirements for being a chaplain. An individual must go through an application process and an interview process with this writer. He or she must display a vibrant relationship with Jesus, a heart for missional ministry and a desire to faithfully serve the community of the YMCA. They must be available to serve at least three hours a week and display teachable hearts. They must complete a background check, provide references and follow all of the steps that are required in the chaplaincy application process that are listed in the handbook.



In addition to displaying the different heart attitudes that would qualify one to be a chaplain, there are various roles and avenues of ministry that a chaplain can pursue. In general, a chaplain will commit to serving for an average of three hours a week. They may lead Bible Studies, teach classes that point hearts to Christ, lead devotionals at staff meetings and pray before functions. They can also be available for members and staff for discipleship, counseling, or to respond in life crisis moments. Since there are various avenues at the YMCA, we will attempt to recruit different people that have ministry hearts towards these areas. For example, there is a senior center at the YMCA and, therefore, we will recruit someone who has a passion to reach seniors for Christ. There is also a youth center, a children's center and various women's initiatives, etc. Each of these avenues requires different ministry approaches and we will try to recruit a chaplain that aligns with each area.

Training and continual evaluation is also something that will be a part of the chaplaincy program. Chaplains will meet, once a month, for a training time. Each of these 12 sessions will intentionally cover a different area of chaplain ministry. Different topics include, effective listening, handling crisis situations, how to naturally share the Gospel and understanding the context of the YMCA. Various leaders including chaplains, other guest trainers and myself will lead these sessions. There will also be a debriefing and evaluation time at each monthly meeting.

There are some practical aspects of being a chaplain that will also be important to understand. A chaplain will report to the front desk that they are available and hang a sign with their picture on it so that members will know that they are available. A chaplain will also come with an official nametag on and try to be located in a visible area. Chaplains will report in a chaplain log book so that the YMCA can have a record of ministry being accomplished in various areas. They also must follow specific codes of conduct that are detailed in their chaplaincy handbook.

For the first year, we will begin with no more than seven chaplains. This will be an introductory year where we will try to assess different strengths and weaknesses of the program. I will recruit one chaplain to take on the administrative functions that will surface. I will also purchase resources that will help the chaplains minister well and I will seek to determine if there are training other training possibilities that can be incorporated for the future.

My hope and desire is that the volunteer, chaplaincy program will be used by God, in mighty ways, to effect many lives at Countryside. I expect that the feedback from staff and members will be very positive and that people at Countryside will realize that this is an organization that is radically different from most work out facilities. My desire is that they will come to the YMCA with the hopes of addressing some felt need, but through interaction with a chaplain, they will see that they have a deeper need that can only be met by Christ!

### Initiative #3 - A Missional Church

A final initiative, and in this writer's opinion, the most effective initiative that God uses to bring renewal to a YMCA is the planting of a missional church within the YMCA. This writer is often asked the best way to plant a church within a YMCA. I speak on this topic to various groups, help to coach church plant teams that are ready to launch, and most significantly, help to lead a church that is trying to be a healthy missional church within a YMCA. Though all the complexities and details of planting a church is far too broad of a topic for this thesis project, this writer has developed a five-part process that serves as a guide to approaching the unique missional context of the YMCA. Again, this is not intended to be a complete manual on how one would plant a church, but merely a template comprised of five sequential steps towards planting a healthy church within a YMCA. This writer desires to use these five steps as a framework for coaching other

YMCA church planters, as the structure for a message of “how to plant a Church within a YMCA” that I am continually asked to share, and finally, as the architecture for the continual conversation of our own leadership team as we evaluate the church that God has given us to serve. Enclosed, in appendix C, is an outline of five steps towards an effective YMCA church plant.

This writer has attempted to frame these five steps with an analogy that has proved to be very helpful. The process of ministry has often been compared to harvesting a crop. There seems to be five natural steps in the process of farming. A farmer needs to test the soil, prepare the ground, sow seeds, nurture the plants and reap the harvest. These five steps each contain different actions and objectives, but they flow together to, ultimately, reap a harvest. Successful church ministry within the YMCA seems to follow this similar pattern.

### **Necessary Heart Conditions**

Before one should even embark upon the potential of planting a church within a YMCA, there are some pre-plant heart conditions that need to be present. Among the many Biblical passages that are helpful to shape this thought process, two passages have proved to be extremely helpful in helping people to discern whether or not their hearts are ready to plant a church within a YMCA.

The first passage is John 4, the story of Jesus and the woman at the well. In sharing this passage, I will point out how in Biblical times, the well was the gathering point for community. People would come because they had a physical need that would be met at the well. However, in meeting physical needs by being the source of water, the well also became the community gathering point for relationship building, informal business and connections. One day, Jesus was at the well and dared to break multiple barriers by asking a Samaritan woman for a drink. In talking with her, he pointed to her

physical thirst as a means to reveal her deepest thirst. This story is full of YMCA implications. A woman encountered Christ at the community gathering point. She came to the well with a surface level thirst, but in the process, her true thirst for Christ was realized and fulfilled. This writer believes that the 14,000 global locations of the YMCA are the great wells of the modern day world. They are the gathering points of community amongst the countless cities of the world. People come in hopes to fulfill a certain physical need, but in the process of coming, they tend to experience a sense of community.

Churches that desire to have effective missional ministry within the YMCA must see their YMCA as the great well of their community. A church planter has to see beyond a place where one can simply do a church service, use the nursery and set up signs. A church planter must see that this is the place where people come with the desire to meet certain thirsts in their life, but their deepest thirst can only be met by the "C" in the YMCA. A church must be willing to have people that will sit by the side of the well to show people how to find the Living Water.

A second critical passage that helps to discern the right heart attitude towards planting a church in a YMCA is found in Matthew 9:35-38. This passage is found in the aftermath of Jesus traveling to many villages and cities and engaging in the exhausting ministries of healing, teaching and proclaiming the Gospel. When He saw even more crowds, however, he had compassion on them and turning to His disciples, said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few." He then gave one of the only prayer requests that the Bible records from the lips of Jesus. He urged them to pray that the Lord of the harvest would send laborers into the harvest field. This text has profound implications for missional ministry within a YMCA. Jesus did not pray that his laborers would remain in the farmhouse. He didn't pray that they would be able to even attract

people out of the harvest fields and into the farmhouse. Jesus prayed that His laborers would be among the harvest.

It is absolutely critical when people are planting a church within a YMCA, that they see the community of the YMCA as a harvest field. This is not merely a place to set up a farmhouse, once a week, hoping to attract people out of the harvest fields and into the farmhouse. For YMCA ministry to be effective, it has to be a commitment to incarnate into the very life of the YMCA harvest field. They must be willing to serve, volunteer, coach, listen and love the people of the harvest field.

There are also significant questions that can help to probe the heart as to why people would want to plant a church in a YMCA. Most of these questions center on discerning whether or not they desire to be a church “at” the Y or a church “of” the Y. The single preposition changes everything. Do they view their YMCA as merely a convenient stepping-stone towards their ultimate vision of building their church or do they have to have a passion for their YMCA as “the well” of the community? Are they renting a room or committing to minister at the neighborhood well? Do they need some temporary space until they can get a bigger farmhouse or are they drawn to the harvest field? Are they committed to staying there unless God directs them otherwise? Questions such as these will probe the true motivation of why a church planter may want to plant in a YMCA and whether or not it will be an effective partnership. When these heart conditions are present, the steps towards a healthy church plant will follow.

### **Testing the Soil**

Before a farmer plants, he does a soil analysis. He assesses what kind of crops will grow in the soil and if the soil is rich or deficient in certain nutrients and minerals. Likewise, there is an essential period of time, before a church is launched, where a church planter must assess how God is already moving in a YMCA and how far that

particular association has drifted from its original mission. This process involves much prayer and the simple acts of observing and discerning how God is moving. It involves noticing the kinds of classes that are offered, the amount of Christian influence present in the programs and if there are any Bible Studies, prayer meetings and believers amongst the staff.

This testing period also involves asking key people important questions. Some of these questions include, "I noticed your mission is to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all. How do you do that? What are the Christian Principles? How do you practice them? What do you have going on in the Spirit part of your triangle?" How these questions are answered will reveal much of the Christian influence of an association. Much of this testing and observing is aiming towards the prayerful decision of the types of ministry initiatives that will "grow" in this environment.

### **Preparing the Ground**

The second major ministry step is a process of preparing the ground. A farmer plows the ground, breaking up the hardened soil so that it is ready for seeds. He may also have to clear some rocks and do some weeding for a healthy planting. Likewise, the ground of the harvest field in a YMCA needs to be prepared for seeds to be thrown. This season mostly involves gaining credibility and trust. The biggest hindrance to ministry initiatives happening within a YMCA, is trying to move forward before trust has been gained. Often the YMCA staff has a certain degree of skepticism that a church or church leaders may want to act in a parasitic way to the YMCA. They want to be in their building, take their members, and use their facilities but they may not be willing to serve and give back. These are obstacles that prevent the growth of ministry. Trust is gained when one truly becomes a part of the YMCA family. This involves volunteering, serving,

being present at events, joining their initiatives, signing up for committees and countless other ways to become an insider in this organization. As many people within a church become insiders within the YMCA community, the ground becomes soft for ministry initiatives to occur.

In addition to these actions, there is nothing that prepares the ground for ministry like the movement of the Lord in response to intentional prayer. It must never be forgotten that this whole movement began as a prayer meeting. The George Williams prayer initiative is a type of intentional prayer strategy that is modeled after the founder of the YMCA. It involves praying, name-by-name, for the different staff members of a local YMCA. When a church planter or a church planting team prays intentionally for the staff of a local YMCA, God tends to move in mighty ways in response to those prayers.

### **Sowing Seeds**

After the soil has been assessed and the ground has been prepared, the time is right for seeds of ministry to be planted within a YMCA. The objective of this time period is to extravagantly sow seeds of ministry throughout the various avenues of the YMCA. This seems to be the moment where it works best to propose a church partnership to the YMCA leadership. They trust the church planter as an integral part of their YMCA family and they don't have concerns that he will be unsafe to their community. This is also the time to offer mission training to the staff, to present the possibility of being a volunteer chaplain and to offer to teach a class that aligns with a felt need such as a marriage class or a financial class. One can offer to lead devotionals at sporting events, to train coaches or to lead Bible studies. There is a vast array of ministry possibilities that can occur when one is sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and the ground is prepared for seeds.

## **Nurturing**

When seeds take root and begin to grow, a farmer will engage in the process of nurturing the plants. Through sunlight, water and the farmer's direct care, a plant grows into maturity. When seeds take root within the ministry context of the YMCA, there is a nurturing process that begins to happen. This entails investing in discipleship relationships that will reproduce other discipleship relationships. It also involves nurturing individual programs and initiatives that God has caused to bear fruit. It involves larger percentages of a congregation thinking missionally and looking for ways to invest their lives in God's Kingdom through the ministry context of the YMCA. This is the long-term ministry season that occurs within a YMCA. Much of this process entails planting new initiatives and pursuing new gospel encounters with unbelievers, yet nurturing the ministry that God is allowing to bear fruit. This is also the process of building a strong partnership between the church and the YMCA, volunteering into higher levels of leadership within the YMCA and helping to shape their future direction as trusted insiders within their movement.

## **Harvesting**

After the soil has been tested, prepared, planted and nurtured, it is the time of the harvest. This is the ministry moment when the ministry is surging forth in ways that only can be defined by God. The majority of a congregation is pouring out within multiple creative avenues within the YMCA. Disciples are reproducing disciples, staff members are viewing their jobs as full-time ministry and the lives of members are being radically changed as they encounter Christ within the YMCA. Jesus is receiving an answer to His



prayer request because a church is comprised of laborers that are totally devoted to the harvest.

These five steps are far from definitive or comprehensive, but they do provide a template for approaching the missional context of the YMCA that this author believes will be successful.

14,000 lighthouses are bearing the potential of giving great light to their communities. They have been designed for this purpose and are overflowing with potential. Sadly, a great majority of lighthouses have experienced a global dimming. However, this author believes that if a group of people will train the staff of a YMCA in their true mission and values, create a chaplaincy program that will engage in evangelism and discipleship and plant a missional church within a YMCA, that God will use those initiatives to help relight the lighthouse. The heart of God is to shine the Light of Life to the ends of the earth. This author believes that the YMCA will, one day, fulfill its mission again. May the YMCA press onward in its calling to shine the light, for one day its purpose will be complete when, "the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Revelation 21:23.

## CHAPTER 5

### RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is much that this writer has learned in the process of implementing a three-part plan to re-light the lighthouse of the Countryside YMCA. There have been great joys and moments of sorrow, God-given results and sobering revelations. This writer is battle-weary, yet surging with the confidence that the Lord has begun a work that He will carry out until completion. This chapter will debrief what I have learned and what I am learning, results that I have seen and recommendations for fellow laborers. I will examine each of the three areas of this project: the training seminars, the chaplaincy program and the planting of a missional church. This writer's great desire is that other torchbearers that are called to re-light the lighthouse of their local YMCA, might glean from these reflections and be emboldened in their steps.

#### **The Current Cultural Moment of the YMCA**

This writer is more convinced than ever that this is one of the most critical moments in the history of this movement. A national rebranding strategy has recently been implemented which has caused quite a stirring in the conversation about the mission of the YMCA. The national movement has chosen to refer to themselves by their colloquial nickname, "the Y." Though they haven't removed the final three letters from the name of the YMCA, there seems to be a subtle decrease of Christian emphasis. Instead of clearly communicating their mission within their rebranding strategy, they have faded it into the background and have put forth a three-pronged emphasis, proclaiming that they are for "healthy living," "youth development," and "social responsibility." It is also clear to this author that as they have rebranded the present, there has been a subtle rebranding of the past. The vast majority of the Christian heritage has been

removed from current resources and replaced with phrases that depict the YMCA as an organization dedicated to the social good of society rather than a movement committed to evangelism and discipleship. The vessel is attempting to dim the Light. Never before in history has there been such a need to re-light the lighthouses of the YMCA.

### **Training Seminars**

The first component of this writer's three-part plan to re-light the lighthouse of Countryside YMCA was the development and implementation of two training seminars. By God's grace, these seminars have been used in incredible ways and I have been able to witness really encouraging results. First of all, there are some fascinating reactions that I continually observe among the employees at Countryside during the training. When they hear that this organization is all about Jesus Christ and that they are, essentially, hired to be in full-time ministry, it causes quite a stirring. The people in the crowd that appear to be Christians seem to get a look on their faces as if they have just received the best news that they have ever heard. The large portion of the crowd that seems to be somewhat spiritually sensitive tends to look confused, yet somewhat motivated and inspired by the whole concept. A small portion of the crowd seem to react as if they are internally saying, "Oh no, I'm in the wrong job!" Before I am done with the training, I acknowledge that many of the people in the room feel inadequate and unequipped to understand the love of Christ and to show His love to others. At this point, I offer that our church would love to do absolutely anything to help equip every member of the Countryside staff to better fulfill its mission. I then offer Bible-studies, classes and discipleship relationships that are available to all of them.

An example of a true success story through one of these training times happened when I conducted a training session for the teachers of the childcare program at Countryside. There are approximately forty teachers that teach about two hundred kids

in the program. One evening, I came with my children's minister and another Godly woman that teaches in my church. I was introduced as "their board member and boss" and a hush seemed to come over the crowd. I then proceeded to encourage them and to tell them the story of the YMCA and the true mission. I then, lovingly communicated that they may all have different ideas of what they were hired to do, but ultimately, from now on, they had one simple goal and that was to model the principles of Jesus to these children. Their highest goal is not education or childcare, but to show these kids Christ. When many of them looked confused, I had my ladies stand up and invite them to two noon-time Bible studies that would be offered to the teachers, training them in the basics of Christianity for anyone who would like know more. We then supplied every classroom with children's Bibles and Biblical media. A few of these teachers are now in our congregation, several come to our noon-time Bible studies, our children's ministry curriculum is being incorporated into the YMCA's curriculum and most significantly, hundreds of kids are learning about Jesus every single day. The beauty of all of this is that this is not something strange or outside of the boundaries of their job description. Instead, this is a return to the original essence of what it means to operate a YMCA childcare.

Another surprising result of these trainings is that God has used them as a doorway to many different audiences within the YMCA. I, initially, developed these trainings for the employees at Countryside. Relatively quickly, however, the CEO realized that offering mission training is something that should not be limited to his employees only, but that the entire board should be grounded in the mission and history of the YMCA. A retreat was planned where I was asked to train the thirty-five people on the board of directors and the seven people on the board of trustees. After this, the staff felt that it would be a great thing for the members of Countryside to be aware of what the

YMCA is all about. Therefore, a member orientation video was created and I was asked to offer some mission-training segments throughout this video.

In addition to the staff, board and members at Countryside, a second door that God has opened will have a broad impact upon future leaders of the YMCA movement. I have been asked to be one of the “principles and practices” trainers for the Y of the USA. This is a wonderful opportunity because, annually, they ask the uprising leaders in the YMCA movement to be trained for higher leadership. These are the future CEOs, executive directors and individuals that have been labeled “tomorrow’s leaders.” They come together to be trained in several different categories and I have been asked to be one of the trainers for the history and heritage portion of the YMCA. This is an unbelievably strategic platform to shape the future leaders of the movement. I also did this type of training for the Kansas associations of YMCAs and have been asked to consider offering training in Oklahoma and South Carolina.

A final audience that the Lord allowed these trainings to be used for was a national conference for Christian leaders within the YMCA.<sup>1</sup> This was a large audience of higher leaders that were highly motivated to learn more about the Christian heritage of the YMCA and how local associations can truly live their mission. This was an incredible experience as the Lord used these trainings to embolden many of the YMCAs’ Christian leaders.

After training many different YMCA audiences, a recommendation that I would have is to adapt the training to the type of audience. Each audience seems to really come with different values and different aspects of the training that they resonate with. For example, when I speak to a group of YMCA teachers, lifeguards, fitness instructors or anyone else that is not in higher leadership, but asked to perform a specific role, they

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<sup>1</sup> This conference was entitled the “John 17:21” conference and took place in Colorado Springs, Colorado on October 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

tend to care less about the history of the movement and the leaders that have shaped the mission. I tend to see them care, primarily, about what is in the sphere of their individual job. It speaks to their heart when one can show them that their job, no matter how small it may seem, can influence lives and cause great impact for eternity. They also tend to resonate with training that simply helps them implement Christian principles into the very practical, every day, areas in which they interact.

In contrast to YMCA employees, when training board members and business leaders, I tend to see them enjoy expanded clarification on the nature of a mission and vision and how this organization can maximize results by being mission driven. They tend to resonate with clarity and with stories of YMCA leaders who lived the vision and, therefore, created transformational change within their communities.

The Christian leaders of the YMCA movement tend to be inspired by other great Christian leaders throughout history who stood strong, did not compromise the true mission of the YMCA and witnessed great fruit for the Kingdom because of their faithfulness.

Though it is certain that the Lord has had His hand upon these training sessions, I have often reflected upon the long-term effectiveness of training in this format. Whenever I speak at a training session, there seems to be some immediate excitement mixed with shock and momentum that is created. However, about two weeks later, I tend to wonder if any thing that I taught is retained, or if all the people truly remember is that they liked what I had to say. The training never seems to stick very long. They leave these sessions excited but tend to go back to their budgets, class sign-ups, and all the other minutia of their daily reality. Though training is effective in disseminating a lot of information to a crowd, it seems like what employees truly need is a mentor who can walk through the daily reality of everyday, YMCA life, showing them how to live the mission. The training sessions seem to be an imperfect medium to display the message.

One suggestion I would make that helps to sustain more long-term retention is to create some space for the employees, themselves, to come up with applications to the training. It seems if they come up with action points to accomplish, rather than me giving them bullet points on a power point screen, it is far more effective. In light of this, I have created more table talk time and I encourage them to get together as staff teams to talk through their applications in the following weeks. Though there could be ways to train in a more effective manner, this writer truly believes that God's hand has been on these training sessions and that God has used them to bring small amounts of transformation to employees throughout the YMCA movement.

### **Chaplain Program**

The second major initiative that has been launched in an effort to re-light the lighthouse of Countryside YMCA is our chaplaincy program. As God has used YMCA chaplains throughout the History of the YMCA to accomplish much fruit for His kingdom, it has been a joy to see the Lord use this avenue once again! This program has taught me several lessons.

First of all, I have learned that the term, "chaplain" carries a lot of different baggage. When people hear that word it conjures up different images in peoples' minds. Some think of the role of a military chaplain, some associate it with a YMCA pastor, some a counselor, etc. I probably would search for a better name for the program if it were not a title that has such rich, historical precedence within this movement.

Secondly, I have learned the importance of choosing chaplains slowly and carefully. A chaplain has to be theologically sound, aligned with the vision of the YMCA and equipped for evangelism and discipleship. Sometimes, the joy of seeing willing hearts and the excitement that comes from growing the numbers in a program can cause one to move a little too quickly. I also think that the first crop of chaplains that are

chosen need to be strong, self-starters in the world of ministry. The first year seems to demand that chaplains are able to see and create ministry opportunities. I have also learned that chaplains are far more effective when they are gifted in relational evangelism. The YMCA staff tends to have a stereotype in their minds of loud, confrontational evangelists who are roaming the halls trying to force people to convert. They fear this type of evangelism but are blessed by a gentle, relational approach.

In addition to these aspects, I have also learned that this program seems to grow at a slower rate than I would have envisioned. It began with seven chaplains and I assumed that I would double the number after a year. After two years, I assumed we would have more than twenty chaplains. After about a year, I had grown the program from seven chaplains to five. I have found that it is difficult to recruit solid, ministry-minded people to volunteer to serve for three hours a week. It seems like schedules are so packed full that people struggle to fit something like this into their weekly routine. I would recommend that people seek to grow a chaplain program in a slow, strong and steady way.

I would also highly recommend that chaplains are chosen that can relate with key areas in the YMCA. We had some chaplains that simply did not know where they fit in or what avenue would be their best context of ministry. It is a wonderful blessing when there can be a chaplain focused on teenagers, seniors, men, women, athletes, kids and all other major areas of a YMCA.

I have also learned that training and evaluation are very important aspects to this program. I launched the program assuming that I would just figure out training as I went. I learned pretty quickly that people feel under equipped to handle the many different ministry situations that can occur. Our program, now, has planned a different training time for each monthly session. These sessions range from effective listening to crisis counseling to the history of the YMCA. Having a yearly plan has helped our program



tremendously and I would recommend that people create a training plan before they launch their program.

Alongside of training, It also helps to develop a tracking system so that people are held accountable to a weekly pace of ministry. Countryside YMCA has developed a logbook where chaplains are able to record their ministry time.

There have been some wonderful results that have occurred as God has used our chaplains at Countryside. This past year, there have been multiple stories of people who have been ministered to in profound ways by chaplains. Two of our chaplains have led funerals for members of the YMCA community. These members didn't have a home church and considered their YMCA chaplains to be the spiritual influencers in their lives. There have also been multiple crisis situations where chaplains have intervened. Chaplains have been there to minister through suicide conversations, marital problems and various situations where addictions have been present. When a person is ministered to in a moment of pain, he or she seems to never forget the role that the chaplain played in their lives.

As a result of this program, the spiritual influence at this YMCA has become greater. Chaplains open up staff meetings with devotionals, pray before events and are often sought after to listen to staff members who need to talk to someone. This writer was charged with being the chaplain of the leadership board and I begin every leadership meeting with prayer and a devotional that points hearts to the "C" in the YMCA.

### **A Missional Church**

The steps to planting a missional church within a YMCA have been forged within this writer through joy, stress, amazing blessings and deep sorrows. Antioch, the church of the Y, has experienced great success stories and we have also learned from failures.

The writer believes that lessons that I have learned in this process will be part of the ministry that God wants to accomplish in and through me for a lifetime as I pour my life into the vision of re-lighting 14,000 lighthouses. It is a joy for me to share some lessons that I have learned and some recommendations that I would have for fellow torchbearers.

### Heart Check

First and foremost, I would say that it is important to check one's heart and motivation if one wants to plant a church within a YMCA. It is critical that one comes with an attitude of a missionary on a mission field, not as an entrepreneurial ministry builder that is looking at the best stepping stone to accomplish his church vision. This writer has seen several individuals fail in YMCA church planting because they began with the wrong heart foundation.

### The Pace of Planting

A second lesson that I have learned and a recommendation that I would offer is not to move too fast through the steps. Often, church planters desire to fly through the trust building and serving phases to launch their church as quickly as they can. Though there are times that the soil is in perfect condition for the planting, this author has seen that the vast majority of the situations require relational depth before a church plant is launched. This writer has also seen a simple rental agreement happen at the beginning while the missional steps develop in the background. Therefore, a church would begin by simply renting the space in the eyes of the YMCA but then the relationship would develop into a missional partnership over time. The partnership, however, always takes time and trust.

## Expectations

This writer has also seen the painful process of many church planters who launch strong and fizzle quickly because of wrong expectations of church growth within a YMCA. I recall a conversation where a church planter was attempting to put a church in a YMCA. He told me of how he wanted to outgrow the YMCA in six months, create multi-site locations in the next year and create a church similar in size and impact to North Point Community Church in Georgia within a few years. I couldn't help but have the thought, that sometimes a church planter's vision can be an idol within their heart that God desires to break. Their identity is subtly tied to their massive vision and God often slays the vision to re-forge a broken man into a dependant vessel that God desires.

YMCA churches usually grow slower than the average church. It breaks many peoples' paradigm of what it means to go to "church." One should expect much of the growth to happen as an overflow of personal ministry, not from marketing techniques that can somehow make a church that meets in a gym seem like the most attractive option in the area. The acoustics will be horrific, the place may smell and there will always be annoyances. One should expect very little transfer growth as I have found it rare that a church member will be disgruntled from their typical church and say, "I think I will try out the church that meets in the YMCA!" This can be a tremendous blessing as little baggage is transferred from other churches. It will also grow slowly because it takes a lot of servanthood to make a Sunday morning service happen. There will be chairs, stages, sound systems and tables that always need to be set up and taken down. People may get burned out and annoyed that church services take this kind of effort.

## Thankfulness

Amidst slow growth and a few annoyances, one should not overlook the incredible positives that come with being planted in a YMCA! One should be grateful that

the church does not pay a mortgage, change the light bulbs, vacuum rugs, pay for a janitor, pay property taxes, etc. Unlike being planted in a movie theatre or school auditorium, a church can have access to their mission field every single day! One should also be incredibly grateful of the fact that this is, in this author's opinion, the only place in the world that is considered secular space by unbelievers, yet by its own stated mission, is totally devoted to the mission of the church. There could be no better place to plant a missional church than a YMCA!

### Generosity

Another lesson that I have learned in the process of planting a church within a YMCA is that nothing moves hearts like generosity. YMCAs are always behind in their budget and struggling to find money to do anything extra. When a church has an idea, the magic words that can accomplish almost anything are, "We would love for you guys to be able to do this and we will pay for it!" At Antioch, we often give away Christian books or do some small improvement project for the YMCA and we always pay for everything.

Likewise, the YMCA is always doing fundraisers and scholarship programs to support their mission. They have banquets, golf outings, auctions and many other fundraisers. When a church will financially support their initiatives, the church is immediately seen as generous and a valued partner in their mission.

A wonderful example of generosity that our church was able to do was when we offered to transform one of their rooms into a chapel and family resource center. We wanted to make a room feel like a relaxing lounge that anyone could come to if they would want to pray, read or have a Bible Study. We then bought thousands of Christian books that point hearts to Christ. This action was seen as an overwhelming act of love for the YMCA and their gratefulness for our generosity has been a lasting impression.

## Pray for the YMCA Staff

It is impossible to overestimate the value of prayer within the context of ministry within a YMCA. The whole movement began when someone was willing to pray, name by name, for his fellow employees. God seems to move in remarkable ways when churches commit to praying, name by name, for the employees of the YMCA. I recommend that a pastor would pray over the staff list of the YMCA. I think a pastor will also find tremendous fruit if he is willing to be present to pray with the staff people at the YMCA. I often find myself in situations where staff members of the YMCA ask me to pray for them. A large percentage of the YMCA staff now attends our church and I believe that a large part of this has been in direct answer to prayer.

## Programs

A church within a YMCA must also realize that the YMCA is the program center of the community. Their culture is a culture that is always planning events and festivals for their members and for the community at large. One of the best things that a church can do is to join an initiative that the YMCA is already doing. A church can supply volunteers, ideas and resources to make it even better. For example, each year Countryside YMCA does a harvest party. This party entails a pig roast, a bonfire, a haunted house and a hayride. This last year, we joined the YMCA and asked if we could be in charge of the bonfire and the haunted house. We transformed the haunted house into a spectacular carnival and made the bonfire into a place where we creatively shared the Gospel. Our church brought volunteers, ideas and a massive crowd of people. When the event was done, the YMCA was so grateful that our church would help with their event and we were so grateful that we were able to share the Gospel with hundreds of unchurched people. Instead of spending a lot of time doing our own programs, we look to help the YMCA and infuse Christ into their programs.

## Offer Spiritual Enrichment Programs to the YMCA Community

Another ministry recommendation that I would have is to offer spiritual growth and enrichment initiatives to the YMCA community. As a church, we have learned that when we do a marriage conference, we should invite the staff and members of the YMCA. When we do our vacation Bible School, instead of simply creating a program for our church kids, we merge our church kids with the entire YMCA childcare program and offer VBS for everyone.

## A Purposeful Presence

Another of the great positives for planting a church in a YMCA is that it offers an array of possibilities for people to get involved. Virtually, any hobby and pursuit is represented by a program at the YMCA. The challenge for the church leadership is simply to encourage people to do what they already would like to do, but to add the element of intentionality to their actions. For example, if someone likes to play basketball, encourage that person to play basketball at the YMCA with the purpose of being a missional presence on the court. If someone likes to ride a bike, play ping-pong, take a dance class, play disc golf, be involved in a Bible Study, have a young moms' group, or whatever else one would possibly like to do, encourage individuals to pursue something, with a missional purpose, at the YMCA. For example, many of our dads want their sons to be in flag football. I consider it a great success story that last year, of the twelve flag football teams, we had at least six coaches from our church. We believe that the next steps involve us training our coaches in how to lead their teams and their team parents closer to Christ.

One of the more frustrating experiences that this writer tends to experience is the fact that this vision of church involvement on the mission field seems so clear and

compelling to me, yet, I have a difficult time getting my congregation to actually be present consistently at the YMCA. Sometimes, I feel like this vision is easier to commit to in theory, but harder to follow through with in reality. At times, I feel as if the pervading nature of our culture is a schedule-frenzied chaos that allows little free time for missional ministry.

### Childcare Involvement

I would also highly encourage a church ministry to get involved in the childcare program of the YMCA. These are often children from the poorest and most fragmented families of the community and it is an awesome inroad to serving the least of these. Our church replicates our Sunday morning children's ministry throughout the week in the childcare program. These children are often desperate for father figures and for anyone to show love to them.

### Understand the Language and the Values of the YMCA

A final recommendation that this writer would have is to learn the language and the values of a local YMCA. One must find out what is the central passion of the CEO and help him to accomplish what his heart is longing for. Church leaders must listen to the leaders of the YMCA and come to an understanding of what phrases they repeat consistently as they measure success, the biggest frustrations that they experience and what brings them joy. As Paul was able to relate, missionally, in Acts 17, with the people of Athens by knowing their culture and their values, a missionary to the YMCA must take time to observe and learn the culture in which he or she is ministering.

### Overall Results that Have Become Evident in the Culture of the YMCA

This writer has been blessed to be able to implement these three initiatives at

Countryside YMCA, to watch God work through each of these actions and to see some wonderful results. I have witnessed several amazing aspects that now exist in Countryside that this writer feels are indicative of a culture change that has occurred.

For example, these past few years, Antioch has attempted to donate Christian books and other resources to the family resource center. This past December, the CEO of the YMCA put five thousand dollars in the budget for purchasing new Christian resources for the YMCA community. The fact that the YMCA would be buying thousands of dollars in books that point the hearts of their members to Christ is an awesome work of God's grace!

The YMCA has also taken the training session to heart and has committed to being an organization that truly will "put Christian principles into practice." Therefore, this writer has defined twelve different Christian principles, aligned the principles with key Bible stories and has provided illustrations for how to teach each principle. The YMCA has decided to take one principle a month and to let it be their theme principle. For example, the month of January is forgiveness. The story of Joseph forgiving his brothers will be taught within the child-care program. It will be a devotional to open up many classes and meetings. This word is on posters and on axis TV, the inter-YMCA communication device. They are truly taking intentional steps to put the Christian principle of forgiveness into practice!

Another indicator of God's movement has been the presence of prayer. Chaplains are asked to pray before everything at the YMCA. Whether it is a golf outing, a meal, an event, or a party, there will be some chaplain standing up with a microphone and praying for God's presence to be experienced at the YMCA. We also celebrated the national day of prayer by having many staff members and chaplains gather together in a large room and intercede for the staff, the mission and God's purposes to be accomplished in and through the YMCA.



Another cultural change is the embracing of "Faith" as a fifth core value at Countryside. This has been a relatively recent change, but it has caused great fruit. Bible verses are painted on many walls at the YMCA. Verses are also given out in "spiritual vitamin" jars at every desk. It is often communicated in various presentations that Countryside YMCA is a faith-based organization.

Another example of God's blessing is that a large percentage of the staff and board members are now in Bible Studies and discipleship relationships. One of our chaplains is leading a Bible study with the majority of the executive staff women. This writer is leading a discipleship group that has an executive director, the former leader of the board and the next two leaders of the board. I believe these to be the four most strategic men in the Countryside YMCA movement and, once a week, I am opening the Bible with them and teaching them the basics of the faith. There are Bible studies within the childcare teachers and multiple Bible Studies that meet throughout the week. In fact, this writer often walks through the halls and is amazed by the amounts of groups that are studying God's word together!

The Lord is also allowing the YMCA to look upon Antioch with trust and favor. For example, the YMCA recently attempted one of its most significant fund raising and awareness events of the year. It is called, "the breakfast of champions" and the goal is to cast the vision of the YMCA to the community and to interview people who have been positively impacted by the YMCA. They asked our worship pastor to provide music for the event, our executive pastor to be the one to interview the people that were sharing testimonies on stage, one of our key leaders to open and close the event in prayer and this writer to be the keynote speaker. It is amazing how much trust that the YMCA has given Antioch as they look to us to help lead their key functions.

## **Church of the YMCA Network**

Beyond the results present at Countryside YMCA, this writer is overjoyed that the hand of the Lord seems to be moving through churches that are being planted in YMCAs all over the country. I believe that part of my life calling is to lead a network of churches throughout the 14,000 YMCAs around the world. These churches will network with one another, help to resource each other and plant churches throughout other YMCAs globally. In the fall of 2010, I began this network at a YMCA conference center in New York. About forty people gathered together to begin this group. About half of these leaders were church pastors and half of them were YMCA chaplains. This writer, weekly, is in conversation with new church planters that want to be planted in a YMCA or churches that currently meet in a YMCA and simply want more effective ways to do ministry. We are currently in the process of hosting regional gatherings, solidifying a church of the YMCA covenant and forming our long-term goals. We will have another gathering in the fall of 2011. This writer believes that though this church-planting network is merely at its beginning stages, that God is going to use this movement to help to accomplish a global re-lighting of the lighthouses of the YMCA.

## **Conclusions and Expectations**

This project has examined the mission drift of the Young Men's Christian Association, through the specific context of Countryside YMCA. Though it is clear that Countryside YMCA has atrophied in its true sense of mission, this writer also believes that God is beginning to stir once again! The culture of Countryside YMCA is beginning to be transformed and this writer believes that it will continue! The training seminars will move from informational presentations to transformational aspects of life. Many of the staff will continue to come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and see themselves as working in full-time ministry. They will grow in their relationship with the

Lord and commit their lives to using their jobs as a platform of evangelism and discipleship. They will continue to grow in their faith through Bible Studies, small groups and discipleship relationships.


The staff and members will sense a remarkable change as our chaplaincy program multiplies, sending many intentional workers throughout this YMCA community to fulfill the Great Commission.

Antioch will fully embrace the amazing evangelistic opportunities before us. The sports program will become a platform to share the Gospel with kids. The childcare program will become a platform to teach the Gospel to kids. The four hundred classes will become avenues to infiltrate God's Kingdom into everyday life and Antioch: the church of the Y, will help to re-light the largest and most influential lighthouse in the world. This lighting will have a ripple effect as other churches will be planted in YMCAs and one day, there will be churches of the YMCA in every country on earth.


One day, we will see the largest missions organization in the world calling the nations to Jesus Christ once again. We will see the largest provider of Christian education in the world, teaching kids about Christ once again. The largest network of Christian camps will be filled with stories of kids committing their lives to Christ. The largest provider of sports programming will reverse the character crisis in American athletics today. 14,000 missional outposts will fulfill their true destiny of bearing the light of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth.

When Gandalf the Wizard asked Pippin the Hobbit to light the beacon, he knew that middle earth would never be the same. Though the beacon was merely a single tower of dead wood, when lit, other men would see its shining light and they, in turn, would light their beacons. Light would pierce the darkness and call all the men of middle earth to battle. Today, there are 14,000 towers that spread across this world. Like massive torches of dead wood they bear the potential to give the Light of the Gospel of

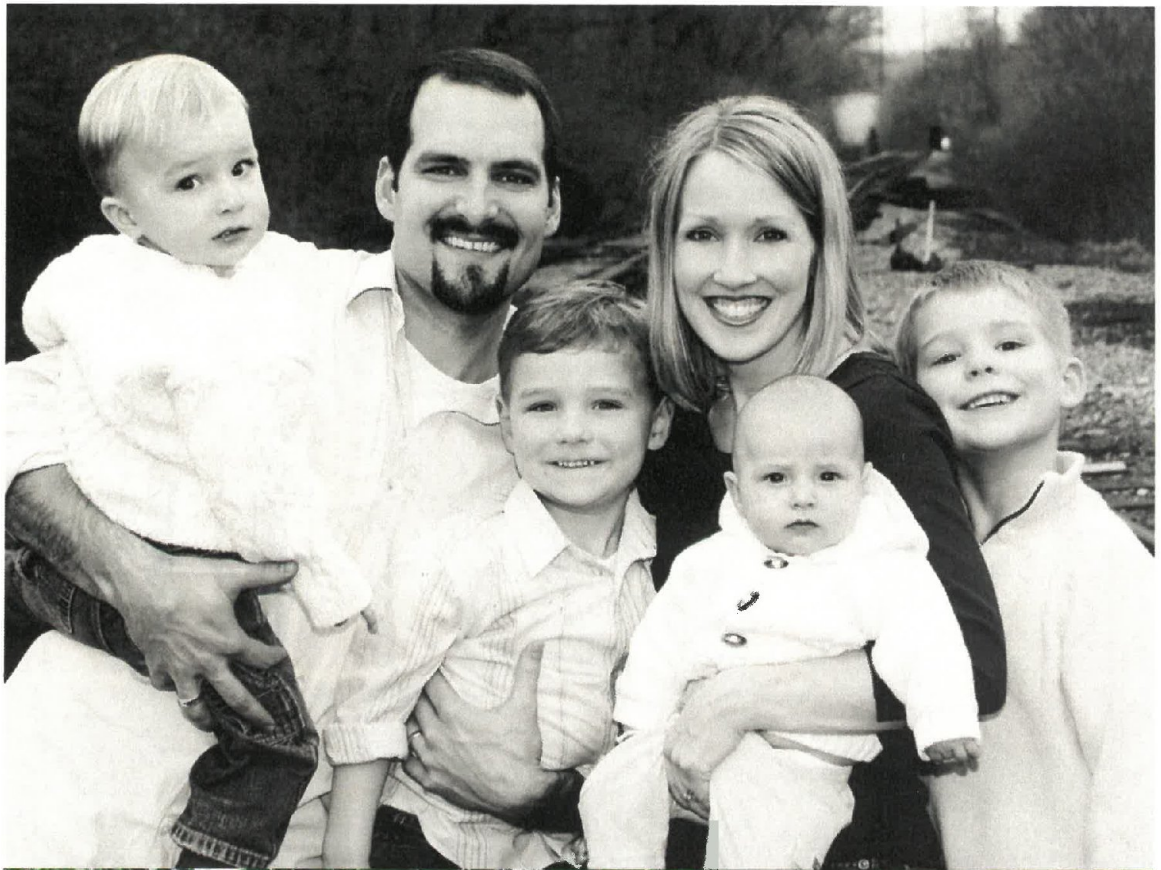
Jesus Christ to all nations and yet, they are not lit. But by God's grace, for His glory and because of His mighty hand, the torch is being lit. The Light is beginning to spread. And, one day, the Young Men's Christian Association will shine forth amongst the nations with the Light that is Life!



# The Mission of the YMCA











# Our Objectives

- What is a Mission?
- What is our Mission?  
(and where did it come from?)
- How can we “live the Mission”  
in our context?



An Organization's  
**MISSION**  
is the heart and core  
of who they are and  
why they exist

An organization's  
**vision**  
is where they are  
going.  
(For example: Where will  
we be in the year 2020?)



Proverbs 29:18

"Where there is no  
vision the people  
perish."

Habakuk 2:2

"And the Lord answered me"  
"Write the vision;  
make it plain on tablets,  
so he may run who reads it."

# Are you smarter than a "Y" 5th Grader?

On a scale of 1-10...

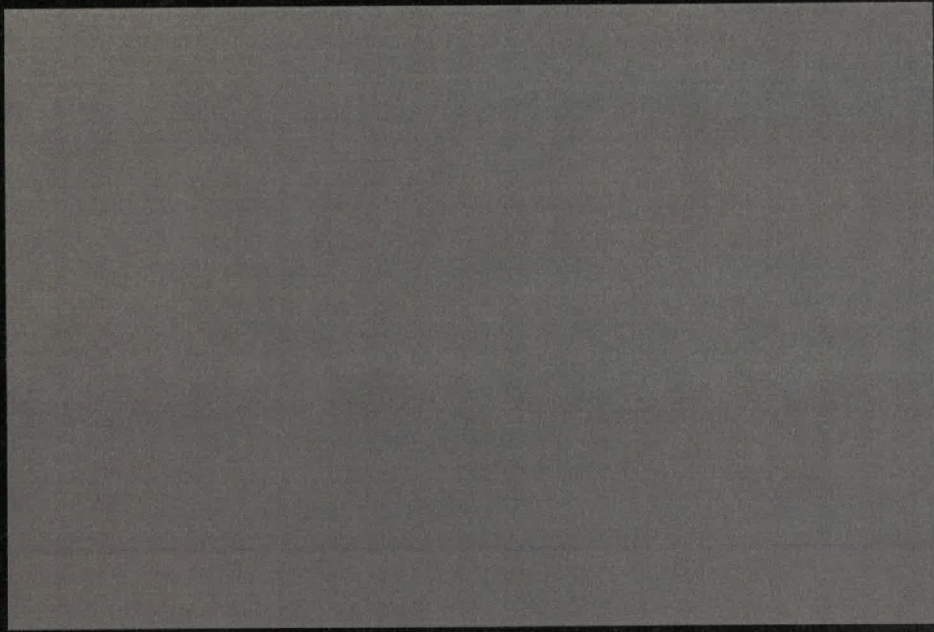
Could you write out the mission of the Y,  
word for word?

Could you name the 5 core values?

Could you name the 11 Christian  
principles?

Could you write a brief history of how the  
Y was started and grew in it's world wide  
influence?





## Table Discussion

Talk about how you feel like you did on the test.



What happens if the majority  
of the people in an  
organization are not operating  
according to a mission?



## #1 Misalignment

## #2 The 3 Killer Bees

- Budgets
- Buildings
- Bodies





**WAL★MART®**

ALWAYS LOW PRICES.

*Always.*

Walmart★com

"To give ordinary folk the chance to buy  
the same thing as rich people."

"To nurture the human  
spirit, one cup at a time,  
one person at a time, one  
community at a time."





"McDonald's vision is to be the world's best quick service restaurant experience. Being the best means providing outstanding quality, service, cleanliness and value, so that we make every customer in every restaurant smile."

## What is a Mission?

An Organization's

**MISSION**

is the heart and core of  
who they are and  
why they exist



# What is **our** Mission?

(And where did it come from anyways?)

Where it all  
began

George Williams



The original purpose:

"To influence young men to spread the Redeemer's Kingdom amongst those by whom they are surrounded."



London, England  
1844



Thomas Sullivan: Boston, 1851

"A social organization of those in whom the love of Christ has produced love to men; who shall meet the young stranger as he enters our city, take him by the hand, direct him to a boarding house where he may find a quiet home pervaded with Christian influences, ... And in every way throw around him good influences so that he may feel that he is not a stranger, but that noble and Christian spirits care for his soul..."



## The Paris Basis - 1855

"The Young Men's Christian Association seeks to unite those young men, who regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Savior, according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to be His disciples in their faith and in their life, and to associate their efforts for the extension of His Kingdom amongst young men."

## The Annual Pledge

1. That our association accepts and supports the statement of purpose of the Young Men's Christian Associations of the United States of America, which is: The Young Men's Christian Association we regard as being in its essential genius a worldwide fellowship united by a common loyalty to Jesus Christ for the purpose of developing Christian personality and building a Christian Society.

## YMCA of the USA Mission Statement

**“To put Christian principles into practice through Programs that build healthy Spirit, Mind, and Body for all.”**

### The Core: Christian Principles

- Caring
- Honesty
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Faith
- Grace
- Hope
- Faithfulness
- Love
- Humility
- Forgiveness



- Caring
- Honesty
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Faith
- Grace
- Hope
- Faithfulness
- Love
- Humility
- Forgiveness

"Preach the Gospel at all times. If  
necessary, use words."  
-St. Francis of Assisi 1182-1226

"I would rather see a sermon than hear  
one any day."

"If we send a child through swim lessons  
and all they learn how to do is swim, we  
have failed."

-Neil Nichol (YUSA CEO)

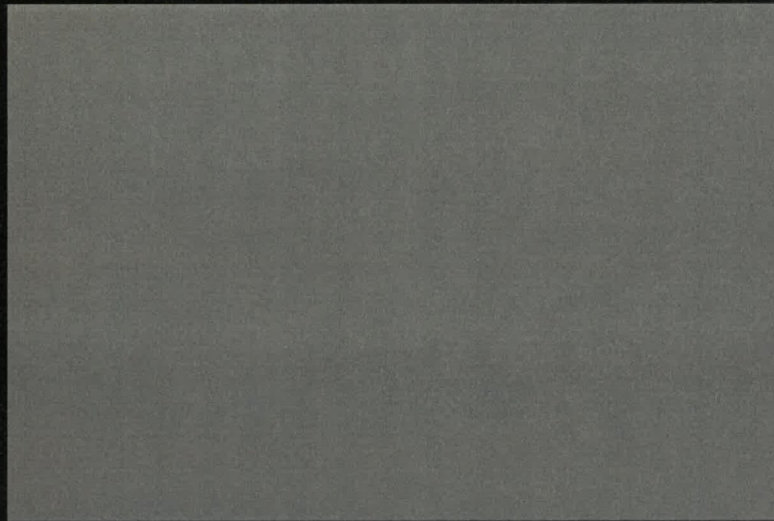
"There is something different about this \_\_\_\_\_"

The Result: A healthy...



Do you have a balanced equilateral triangle in your department?





## Table Discussion

Do you have a balanced equilateral triangle in your department?



Examples of those who  
lived the Mission:



Examples of those who  
lived the Mission:



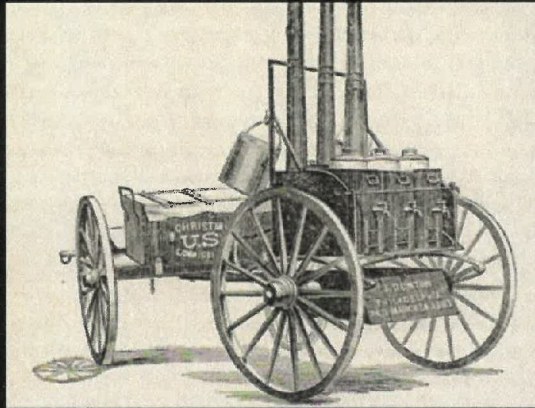


## Examples of those who lived the Mission:



## Examples of those who live the Mission:





## The YMCA Coffee Wagon

How can we “live the Mission”  
in our context?

Table Discussion: 10 minutes



# World Wide Week of Prayer

Live the Logo



**Chi Rho:** The first 2 letters of the name of Christ.

Signifying- Christ is at the core

# Live the Logo



An Equilateral Triangle: The balance of Spirit, Mind and Body.

# Live the Logo



John 17:21 "My prayer for all of them is that they will be **one**, just as you and I are **one**, Father - that just as you are in me and I am in you, so they will be in us, and the world will believe you sent me."



# Live the Principles




What will happen if  
we “live” our Mission?


- Starbucks: (nov. 2007) - 8,505 locations
- Walmart - 5,700 stores
- YMCA - 14,000 locations  
(over 45 million members)

APPENDIX 2

CORE VALUES TRAINING SEMINAR



# The Core Values of Countryside YMCA





An Organization's  
**MISSION**  
is the heart and core  
of who they are and  
why they exist.

An organization's  
**VISION**  
is where they are  
going.

(For example: Where will  
we be in the year 2020?)

## YMCA of the USA Mission Statement

**"To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy Spirit, Mind, and Body for all."**

### Christian Principles

- Caring
- Honesty
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Faith
- Grace
- Hope
- Faithfulness
- Love
- Humility
- Forgiveness



Are you investing or spending your time at the Y?

## Caring:

To be sensitive to the well-being of others; to put others before yourself.

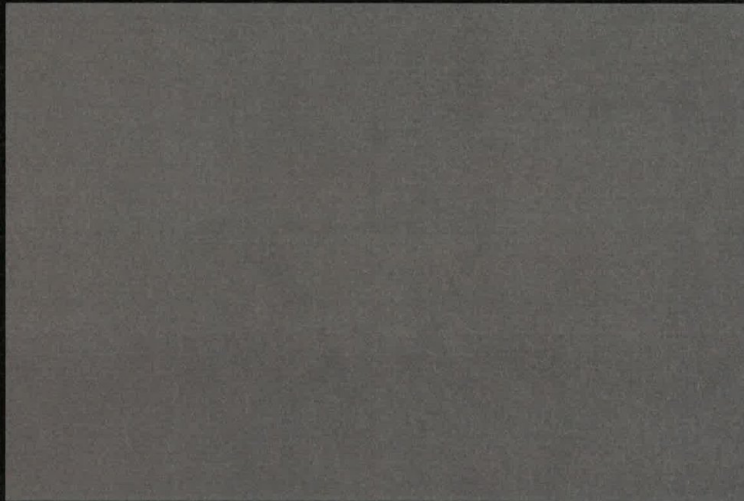
"My command is this love each other as I have loved you" -John 15:12

# Dwight L. Moody



Caring starts by Noticing others



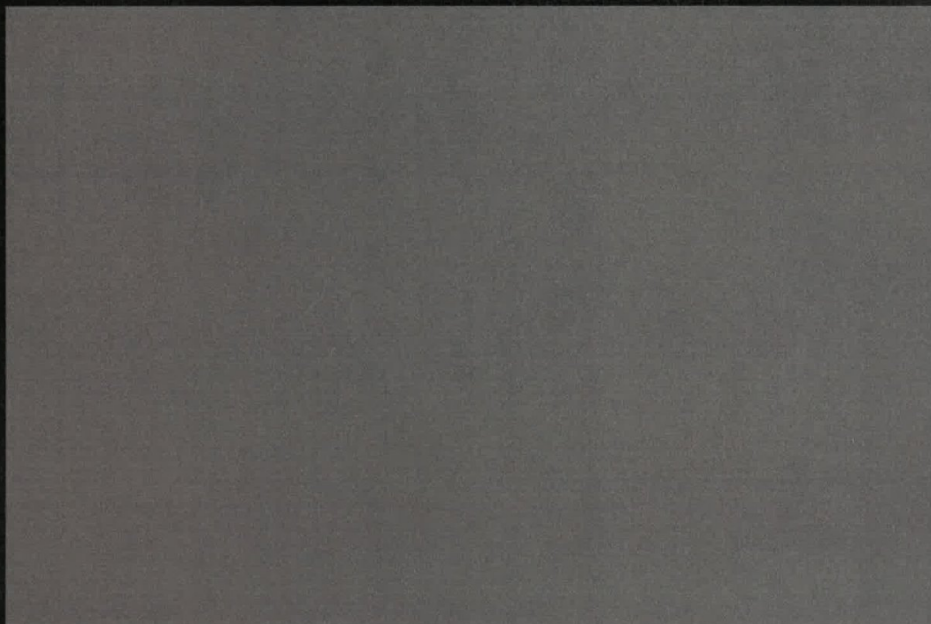


- Who are the invisible people in your sphere of Y influence?  
What can be done to care for them?
- What kinds of people in your sphere of influence do some people find difficult to even like, let alone love?  
What can be done to care for them?

## Honesty:

To lovingly communicate truth.

"Kings take pleasure in honest lips; they  
value a man who speaks the truth."  
-Proverbs 16:13



- What was your 1 take away from David's talk on honesty that you think could be implemented into your sphere of influence at the Y?



# Respect:

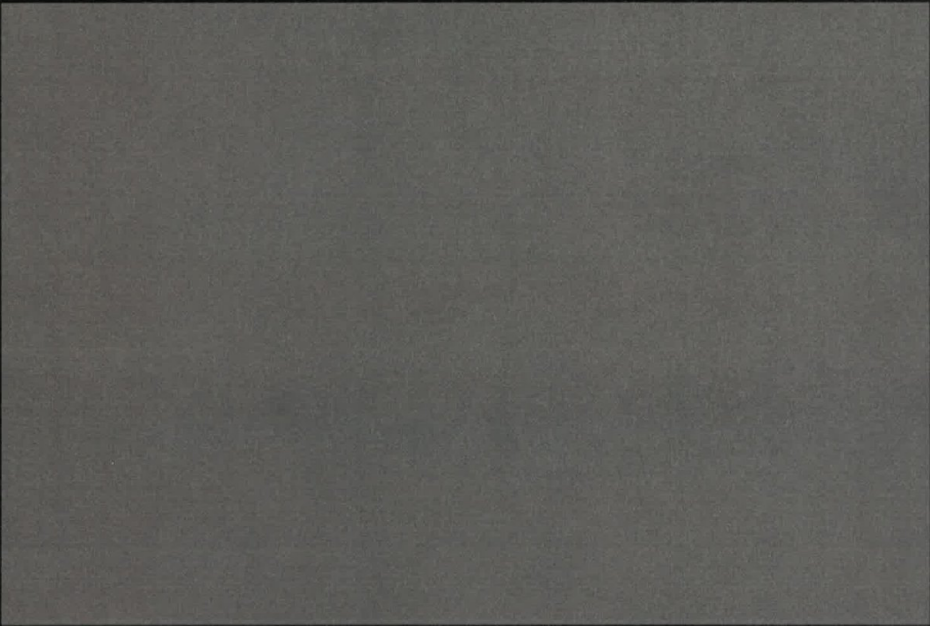
To treat others the way you  
want them to treat you.

"So in everything, do to others what  
you would have them do to you."

-Matthew 7:12

**Elisa Morgan**  
(MOPS)

Nothing communicates respect  
more than listening



In what ways could the bar be raised on the core value of respect in your sphere of influence at the Y?

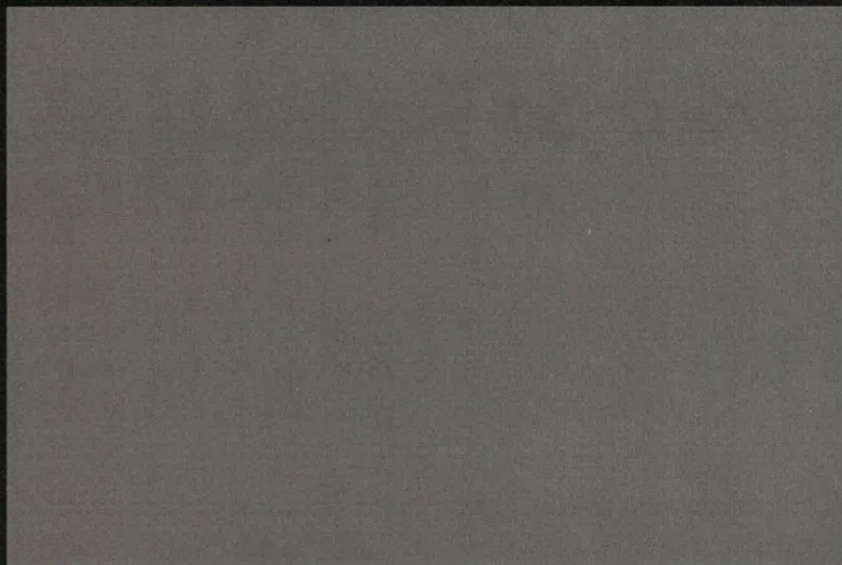
## Faith:

"To develop a **faith** for daily living based upon the teachings of Jesus Christ, the they may thereby be helped in achieving their highest potential as children of God."

"And without Faith, it is impossible to please God." Hebrews 11:6



Many people are one life circumstance away  
from beginning a faith journey.



How are you feeling about "faith" as a core value?  
What kinds of questions do you have about bringing this core  
value into your sphere of YMCA influence?

# Responsibility:

To be faithful to the mission and  
to your commitments.

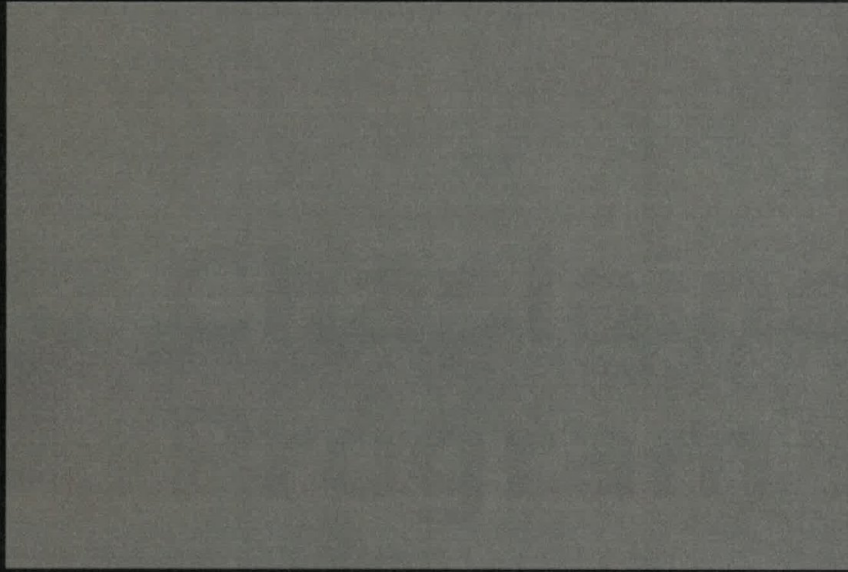
"Well done, good and faithful servant!  
You have been faithful with a few things;  
I will put you in charge of many things."  
-Matthew 25:23



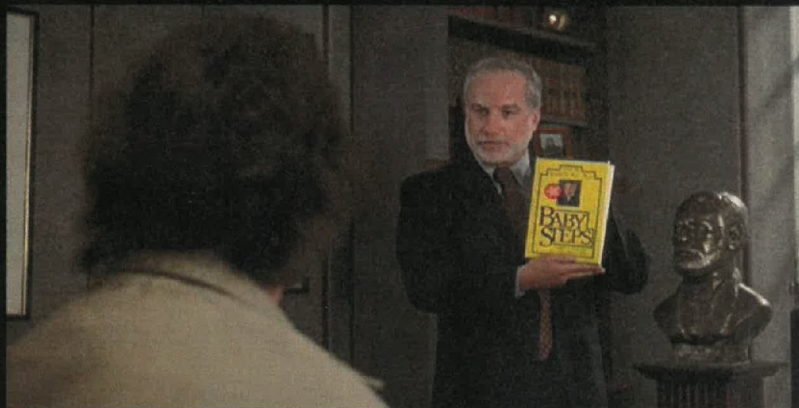
Thomas Sullivan: Boston, 1851

"A social organization of those in whom the love of Christ has produced love to men; who shall meet the young stranger as he enters our city, take him by the hand, direct him to a boarding house where he may find a quiet home pervaded with Christian influences, ... And in every way throw around him good influences so that he may feel that he is not a stranger, but that noble and Christian spirits care for his soul..."





- What could be done in your sphere of Y influence to remind everyone that people are the main thing?



Baby stepping into the Core Values



# Chaplaincy Program



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Dear Friend of Countryside YMCA,

We are honored and privileged that you are taking the time to prayerfully consider joining the Chaplaincy program. By providing chaplains at Countryside, we are able to be a group of people who actively put Christian principles into practice within the YMCA community. People who would not be comfortable setting foot inside a church have an opportunity to experience the love of Christ. Without people like you, the vision would not be able to be fulfilled.

Oswald Chambers, a former YMCA Chaplain, impacted his culture as well as generations to come through his devotions in *My Utmost for His Highest*. You, too, are an influential piece to providing Christian values to our YMCA culture and to future generations.

We are so thankful for you and for your heart to make a difference in the spiritual lives of those who come in contact with Countryside YMCA!

In Christ,

Mike Carrol  
CEO Countryside YMCA  
mikecar@countrysideymca.org

Debra Phillips  
Executive Director of Christian Emphasis  
debraphi@countrysideymca.org

David Newman  
Christian Emphasis Committee Chair  
davidnew@countrysideymca.org

**The mission of the YMCA Chaplaincy Program:  
To demonstrate the love of Christ by caring for and  
encouraging people within the YMCA community.**

**Chaplain Requirements**

- Supports the mission and purpose of the YMCA Chaplaincy Program
- A recognizable Christian leader in their church and community
- Completes process to be a Chaplain
- A willingness to attend an orientation and ongoing training courses
- Actively involved in programs, events, and activities to build exposure to the Christian Emphasis Program
- A commitment to serve a minimum of 3 hours a week
- A willingness to abide by the leadership and direction of the Christian Emphasis Committee.

**Various Chaplain Roles**

Each chaplain has different gifts, strengths, and passions. We encourage chaplains to serve in many different areas throughout the YMCA in various roles. Here are some roles that Chaplains could fill, to give you an idea of the diversity among the chaplains.

- Write devotions for staff meetings or lead devotions at staff meetings
- Meet and greet with the front desk staff
- Sit in the lobby and chat with members and staff
- Serve on a committee to prepare for events such as our Good Friday Service, random acts of kindness, the YMCA World Day of Prayer, etc.
- Play sports and engage in activities with YMCA participants
- Join in on a fitness class and spend time building relationships with members
- Spend time in the kid-zone reading books to the children
- Lead a Bible study at the YMCA
- Lead a class at the YMCA (For example, financial, marriage, family enrichment)
- Pass out hot chocolate to parents at a sporting event
- Converse with parents while they are waiting for their children to get out of a class
- Be available to make a phone call or meet with a member who is in a life crisis moment
- Be available in the chapel to talk to someone or to recommend resources

## **YMCA Character Values**

**CARING** - To be sensitive to the well-being of others; to put others before yourself.

*"My command is this; love each other as I have loved you" (John 15:12).*

**HONESTY** - To make sure your choices match up with your values, to tell the truth.

*"Kings take pleasure in honest lips; they value a man who speaks the truth" (Proverbs 16:13).*

**RESPECT** - To treat others the way you want them to treat you.

*"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you" (Matthew 7:12).*

**RESPONSIBILITY** - To be accountable for your behavior and your obligations.

*"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things" (Matthew 25:23).*

**FAITH** – To believe, trust and hope in God.

*"For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith" (Galatians 3:26).*

### **Identification/Check In:**

- While serving as a Chaplain, the Chaplain must wear a Chaplain name tag or lanyard with proper identification
- Chaplains are encouraged to let the front desk know the time frame they are serving as Chaplain. They should also place the proper "Chaplain on duty board" in the lobby
- Chaplains must record their hours in the volunteer log book

### **Chaplain's demeanor**

- Willing, able, and motivated to love people and successfully win their trust
- Sensitive and perceptive to individual's needs
- Meek and gentle in offering assistance and support
- Walks alongside another, offering friendship and encouragement
- Prayerful
- Seeks the Holy Spirit's guidance
- Lives a lifestyle that honors God in all that he/she does
- Available to accept referrals from staff
- Available to be "on call" for immediate and sudden emergency situations
- Accountable to Christian Emphasis Committee and ultimately to God



## **Confidentiality**

- Chaplains must respect the right to privacy and confidentiality of members and staff unless chaplains are placed in a position where they find out there is harm to self or others that must be addressed to an Executive at the YMCA or the YMCA Christian Emphasis Chair.

## **Limitations**

- The YMCA Chaplaincy Program is not meant to take the place of the Church nor regular formal worship.
- The Chaplaincy Program is not professional counseling .
- The Chaplaincy Program is not a threatening-condemning environment.
- During a crisis, the YMCA Chaplain should continue in a supportive role.
- Chaplains should not provide assistance or support beyond the request of the individual.
- The Chaplaincy Program is not a long-term support resource. It is not intended to deliver mental health services. Individuals should be referred to a counselor or long-term care provider as soon as a need is identified.

## **Code of Conduct**

- We expect chaplains to behave maturely and responsibly, and to respect the rights of others.
- We expect chaplains to follow the code of conduct in the membership handbook.
- We prefer chaplains to meet with same gender, but we know that may not always occur. Chaplains are encouraged to use wisdom and place themselves in healthy situations that are not questionable to outsiders. Closed door meetings with children or members of the opposite gender are to be avoided.
- Chaplains meet at the YMCA and on special occasions outside for YMCA events. If chaplains meet with anyone outside the YMCA, they are to conduct themselves in a manner as though serving as a Chaplain at the YMCA.

## **Procedures for Intervention**

- Chaplains are called to care for and encourage people, but some situations are out side the scope and training of YMCA staff.
- YMCA Chaplains should refer individuals in need of spiritual guidance to an established church when needed.
- Chaplains should refer individuals to counseling when needed.
- Disciplinary or job performance issues are outside the chaplains scope and will be referred to YMCA leadership. YMCA Chaplains should be available to assist in situations that may involve conflicts between people

- or groups, personal illness or loss, or negative behavior.
- If a person has intent to harm self or others, chaplains must report behavior to an Executive of the Christian Emphasis Department.

### **Termination of Chaplaincy Responsibilities**

- If a chaplain decides to end his/her service, it is required that they communicate their intentions to the Christian Emphasis Committee so that proper measures can take place.
- At any time the Christian Emphasis Committee may ask the chaplain to step down from their position if they do not have the same mission of the Chaplaincy Program or there is any conduct that is not consistent with the program's desired approach or agenda.

### **Supervision, Training and Evaluation**

#### **Role of the Christian Emphasis Chair**

- Spiritual oversight of the Chaplaincy program
- Mentor the chaplains
- Evaluate the effectiveness of each chaplain on, at minimum, an annual basis

#### **Role of the Executive Director of Christian Emphasis**

- Administrative oversight of the chaplaincy program
- Risk management
- Track activity of the chaplains
- Background Checks

#### **Role of the Christian Emphasis Committee**

- Policy formation for the chaplaincy program
- Final selection of the chaplains
- Final removal of the chaplains
- The design and implementation of the training of the chaplains

### **Evaluation and Reporting by Chaplains**

- Chaplains required to submit progress report every two months
- Reports to show hours spent, numbers of contacts by type (casual, extended discussions and counseling), accomplishments and issues

### **Review of Program and Evaluation**

- Will be done at a minimum of semi-annual basis

- Review done by Christian Emphasis chairperson and director

### **Application Process:**

#### **Process to Become a Chaplain**

1. Express interest in being a chaplain
2. Meet with the Executive Director of Christian Emphasis to receive an application and overview of the program.
3. Complete a background check through Executive Director of Christian Emphasis.
4. Have an interview with the Christian Emphasis Committee Chair about doctrine, philosophy of ministry, and potential areas of service.
5. The Christian Emphasis Committee will determine the acceptance as a chaplain and help to design a personal plan of your specific chaplain roles
6. Begin serving as a chaplain

## **Application for Chaplaincy**

Name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_

Address:

\_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Birthday: \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security #: \_\_\_\_\_

Drivers License #: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

**PERSONAL TESTIMONY** (Please attach a sheet of paper with brief answers to the following 3 questions.)

1. Would you please briefly tell us a little bit about your own faith journey?
2. Who is Jesus Christ to you? Please share with us some of your core spiritual beliefs?
3. What is your philosophy of ministry? Briefly share with us how you would go about reaching out to people as a YMCA chaplain.

## **REFERENCES**

	<i>Company</i>	<i>Contact Name</i>	<i>Phone</i>
Employer			
Prior Employer			
Character Reference			
Church Reference			

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Debra Philips  
1699 Deerfield Road  
Lebanon, Ohio  
45036

---

### ***PROCEDURES FOR VOLUNTEERS, MENTORS, AND CHAPLAINS***

*AFTER* you have been through the fingerprinting process, please mail this application back to the YMCA at the address mentioned above or bring this to Debra Philips. Once we have received this application and your results from the background check, you will be contacted with further details regarding your service.

I understand that, by signing the statement below, I am indicating that I have read the Chaplaincy Handbook, understand the contents, and agree to further implement the values into my performance as a Chaplain at Countryside YMCA.

---

Applicant signature (please sign)

Date

## APPENDIX 4

### OUTLINE OF YMCA CHURCH PLANT STRATEGY

#### **Outline of YMCA Church plant Strategy**

#### **Pre-questions/ Heart Probing**

**John 4:1-42 (the modern well of the community)**

**Mathew 9: 35-38 (out of the farmhouse into the fields)**

#### **Questions:**

-Do you see the community gathering at the YMCA as the well/Harvest field that God has called your church to minister to, or is the YMCA mostly a venue that is a stepping stone to your greater vision?

Are you trying to build your church and you will take whatever venue is best to do it?

Do you view the YMCA as a strategic missional gathering point where the Gospel can be infused to reach people for Christ?

-Do you have a parasite mentality? Are you joining the center of community to use their space and recruit their members with the hopes of one day leaving to become your own center of community?

**\*\*\* Do you intend to be a church “at” the YMCA or a church “of” the YMCA?**

#### **5 steps of YMCA ministry**

##### **1. Testing the Soil**

-Prayer

-Noticing and observing.

-Missionally discerning... “What will grow here?”



### **-Key questions.**

- Mission statement: What are you guys doing to put Christian principles into practice around here?
- What are the Christian Principles? How do guys define them?
- In the Spirit/Mind/Body realm, what do you guys have here in the Spirit department?

### **-Search for the major idols that are present within this YMCA culture.**

(Acts 17:16-34)

### **-Christian influence observations**

- Board members Christians? Staff members? Bible Studies? Are there devotionals before meetings and programs? Is there an understanding of the mission anywhere?
- Are there verses displayed in the building?
- Program guide --- Is there anything under the Spirit side of the triangle?

## **2. Preparing the Ground**

(Getting the soil ready for seeds to be planted)

Mathew 13--- The process of plowing, weeding and clearing rocks so that the soil will be ready for planting.

- Presence (The YMCA staff must see you as part of the Y membership family)
- Sign up for classes
- Introduce yourself to the CEO/Staff
- Fill out positive feedback cards... encourage.
- Go to events
- Servanthood-- Volunteering-- Coaching

**\*\* The goal is to become an insider through volunteering. This speaks their heart language because they are a volunteer organization!**

- You must meet their physical needs as well as meeting their spiritual needs.
- Join their big initiatives!
- Golf outing, Blood drive, Fund raisers etc...

### **-George Williams prayer initiative**

-This whole movement began as a prayer movement. George prayed for God to open up doors and God responded. There is nothing that breaks up fallow ground like God! Let Him be the one that plows the ground!

## **3. Sowing Seeds**

### **(Mathew 13: Seeds and Soil passage)**

The image of an extravagant sower throwing seeds to take root!

#### **Potential seeds:**

- Christian Emphasis Committee
- Volunteer Chaplain
- Resources that can help families
- Make the proposal (Church rental agreement)
- Offer classes that align with key needs.
- Look for a community-need that is an opportunity to lead.
- (example: hurricane Katrina...fill the racket ball court with items.)
- Discipleship curriculum for the coaches

#### **Seasons of ministry:**

- Fall: Many will Sign up and get involved in classes, leagues, clubs, lessons.
- December: High Spiritual interest/high interest in giving to the less fortunate.

- January: High interest in fixing and balancing life.  
Offer classes that tap into key needs and resolutions as a window to the Gospel.
- Spring (Easter) – Easter Interest... probe questions... invest/Invite
- Summer --- Camp season for the YMCA.
  - Consider putting on a VBS for them.
  - Poolside ministry

#### **4. Nurturing**

(Observing where God has allowed seeds to take root and building those plants to maturity.)

- Discipleship initiatives.
- Small Group initiatives
- Leaders of the church are beginning to take key leadership positions in the YMCA.
- The members of the church begin to integrate into most areas of the YMCA.

The church trains the people to present, purposeful, and to influence towards the Gospel.

- The YMCA childcare takes on Biblical curriculum.

#### **5. Harvesting**

- When the Lord of the Harvest is once again the Lord over all areas of the YMCA.
- Every club, class, league and lesson is infused with Christ and is a platform for pointing hearts to the Gospel and developing believers.
- The church is integrated into all aspects of the YMCA as a comprehensive missional strategy to reach the community for Christ.
- The city begins to look different!

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## VITA

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### EDUCATIONAL

Diploma, Ashwaubenon High School, Green Bay, Wisconsin  
B.A., Auburn University, 1997  
M.Div., Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2003

### DMIN RESIDENCY

2007-2010  
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### MINISTERIAL

Pastor, the Community Church of East Gloucester, 2000-2005  
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